

Rising from the Ashes (Andrew and Lauren)

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Andrew woke up early in the morning feeling fantastic. It was no exaggeration to say that he felt like it had undergone intense nourishment from within. Without even engaging his core, his body shot upright from the bed.

This was something only someone with extremely powerful core strength could accomplish. Yet for Andrew, it happened with nothing more than a thought.

Even so, something felt off. He frowned and glanced down, checking his body.

There was not a scratch on him. His muscles were not overly bulky but had the kind of sleek, sculpted beauty that hinted at explosive power hiding beneath the surface.

Suddenly, a subtle tremor pulsed through his frame, and he knew that the second seal within his body had started to loosen again.

If that night with Lauren, Francesca, and Aspen had triggered the first break in his martial seal, what happened last night had pushed it even further.

Thinking back, it did not take much for Andrew to realize the likely cause was Chantelle. More specifically, the deep connection he had shared with her, both physically and spiritually.

He wondered if intimacy between man and woman actually helped crack the seals inside his body.

For a moment, Andrew could not help but feel how ridiculous that sounded. If that were true, then theoretically, as long as he kept sleeping with beautiful women night and day, the path to regaining his former strength would just unfold naturally.

He shook his head hard, as that was a dangerous thought. If he followed that line, he would just turn into some depraved sex demon.

Only those twisted martial artists who practiced forbidden techniques would rely on something like that. Moreover, he was afraid that while he absorbed the benefits, he might harm Chantelle and the others' bodies.

Looking at the empty space beside him, Andrew could not help but chuckle.

Early in the morning, Chantelle, the ice queen, had anxiously scrambled out of bed, put on her work uniform, and fled in a hurry. She was afraid of getting up late and having Lauren and the other two discover her passionate night with Andrew.

Recalling Chantelle's wild behavior last night, Andrew could not help but grin slightly.

That woman was absolutely addicted.

Usually, she appeared sacred and untouchable, with an icy expression that screamed frigidity. Yet, once she hit the bed, she had surprisingly many demands. She made so many requests that Andrew had to switch positions about five times just to keep up.

Fortunately, she was an exceptional woman. Her body, her looks, even her passion, were flawless. It was like sipping on the richest vintage wine, intense, fragrant, and unforgettable.

After getting dressed, Andrew headed straight to the Rhodes residence because Tiana had requested to see him.

She got straight to the point and asked, "Your duel with Joe is coming up fast. You ready for it?"

Andrew shrugged. "Shouldn't be a problem."

Tiana studied him for a long moment. "You know..... You look different lately. There's something about your energy that has changed."

Andrew raised a brow. "Really? I haven't noticed anything."

Tiana chuckled. "How should I put it... I feel like you've become more handsome. Of course, that's just a surface observation. Internally, it probably reflects that your martial arts have improved again!"

Andrew pondered thoughtfully. If even Tiana had picked up on his transformation, then the loosening of the second seal was definitely real.

Tiana said, "Andy, I asked you here to warn you about the Driscoll family. Joe is proud and arrogant, with his own pride and principles, so at most, he's an enemy you can see coming.

"But the Driscoll family acts with vicious cunning and never follows rules or maintains the dignity of a great family; they might very well strike at you secretly."

Andrew said calmly, "If that's the case, I'll handle whatever comes."

Tiana smiled with relief, then her eyes lit up. "Have you ever thought about taking Lauren to visit Chetvine and the Lloyds once you've settled the grudges here in Blumedale?"

Andrew looked at her and asked, "Mrs. Rhodes, you should know I can't return to Chetvine and the Lloyds right now, don't you? And bringing Lauren along? You know exactly how dangerous that would be." swnovel

Tiana nodded. "Of course I've thought this through carefully! Your identity is too sensitive, and there are serious conflicts within the Lloyd's. Right now, both you and Reginald are living in exile.

She added, "If Lauren goes back with you, she could very well get caught up in the trouble. But ultimately, you can't stay away forever and never return to your family, can you?"

Andrew's eyes turned cold. "Soon, once the second seal in my body is released, I'll be able to face the forces in Chetvine directly without being helpless!"

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Tiana made a sound of agreement, a flush rising to her face as she seemed to hesitate about saying something.

Andrew raised his hand to stop her. "Mrs. Rhodes, you're now a married woman with a pair of lovely daughters. You'd better stop thinking about my father!"

Embarrassed, Tiana replied, "Who said I was thinking about Reginald? I was just... wondering how he's been doing after all these years!"

Andrew said expressionlessly, "I don't know how he's doing, but I can guarantee he's living more freely than anyone else. The last time I broke out of Chetvine, he video-called me from a luxury yacht hotel in Drubae, throwing a no-clothes party with some princess from Middle Veruin."

Tiana snorted. "Typical. Some things never change. Even in exile, he still can't quit that disgusting habit."

Andrew rolled his eyes. "Honestly? I've seen it so many times it barely fazes me. Last I heard, he's even trying to marry into Vestra's richest family. They offered him a huge sum... basically trying to buy his DNA."

Tiana looked ready to explode. "I hope his junk rots off!"

Andrew thought, 'Nope. I'm not getting involved in this!'

Then, he made a quick exit. The emotional mess between Tiana and Reginald was none of his business, and he had zero interest in getting caught in their drama.

However, the moment he stepped out of the Rhodes residence, Andrew felt something strange. It was not obvious and indescribable, but his instincts were screaming that he was being followed.

And not by someone friendly.

Rounding the street corner, Andrew's figure instantly disappeared into the turn. Behind him, a hurried figure followed closely.

The second they turned the corner, Andrew lunged, one hand already snapping toward the person's throat. His eyes were cold and deadly, and if this were a threat, he would snap their neck in an instant.

"Stop! It's me!"

The high-pitched shriek caught him off guard. He pulled back his hand just in time, staring in surprise. "Ms. Freya? What the hell are you doing?"

The "stalker" was none other than Freya, Logan's younger sister and the second of the Keller family beauties.

"You scared me half to death, Andrew! Why are you hiding around corners like a serial killer?" Freya huffed and rolled her eyes, patting her chest.

Andrew said calmly, "Who told you to follow me so sneakily? I thought someone was trying to kidnap me!"

Freya laughed angrily. "You're a grown man. Nobody's going to kidnap you. Besides, I wasn't sneaking around following you."

Andrew raised an eyebrow. "So, what is it?"

Freya came clean. "I've started an entertainment company, but I still need a major investor! Logan said I should come to you for help!"

Andrew frowned. "Put it simply, you need money, and Logan told you to come find me, right?"

Freya nodded. "Exactly, that's right!"

Andrew turned and walked away.

"Sorry, but my money doesn't grow on trees. If you need funding, come to my company for formal negotiations. If the evaluation determines your entertainment company has investment potential, then I'll invest."

He added, "But if you're just looking for a sucker to give you money to play around with, then you should go find those rich kids with more money than brains!"

Freya stomped her foot. "Who are you looking down on? Since I dared to come find you, I did my homework. Let me put it this way-Blumedale's entertainment industry currently has great development prospects.

"I know I was a third-rate actress, not exactly a household name. But I've been in this business long enough to understand how it works inside out. All I need now is a serious investment. With the right backing, I can start signing talent and generating real revenue. "

Andrew listened and gave a small nod. "That's not the worst pitch I've heard, but I'll still need more info."

Freya dangled a car key with a smirk. "I knew you'd be stingy. Come on, let's go check out my office space. I already leased a building downtown."

Andrew gave her a skeptical look. "You signed a lease before locking down funding? Ms. Freya, you clearly aren't hurting for money."

Freya waved it off. "I'm not great at business. This is my first time launching a company, and my dad gave me a little help to get started. I figure if it doesn't work out, losing this money is no big deal. It's my dad's money anyway, and he's not hurting for cash!"

Andrew chuckled. "Ms. Freya, you're such a devoted daughter. Mr. Keller Senior has such a wonderful daughter."