

RISING FROM THE ASHES (ANDREW AND LAUREN)

Chapter 1736

Tiana had been keeping tabs on Andrew's visit to Victoria the entire time. As soon as it ended, she rushed over to Serenity Villa.

She asked, "Andy, that bitch didn't give you any trouble, did she?"

Andrew smiled. "Don't worry, Victoria had some misunderstandings about me at first, but later we cleared everything up!"

Tiana's eyebrows shot up angrily. "You're calling her on a first-name basis now? So, she knows who you are? You're being quite respectful to her, aren't you?"

Andrew could not help but smile wryly. "Yes, Victoria knows my identity, but her reaction was pretty calm. She didn't do anything extreme, and she actually treated me quite well."

Tiana felt a pang of jealousy. "Don't trust that bitch's sweet talk! She might act nice to your face, but stab you in the back later. Do you like her, or do you like me more?"

This was an easy question for Andrew to handle. "Do you even need to ask? Of course, I like you more! You're my mother-in-law and an elder I respect, while with Victoria, I'm just putting on an act!"

Tiana smiled with satisfaction, showing her alluring charm. "That's more like it! Good to know I didn't dote on you for nothing. I was seriously worried that if you fell into Victoria's trap, she sucked you dry! I'd come back and chop off your little buddy myself!"

Realizing how crude that sounded, she blushed a little, her expression suddenly soft with a mature allure.

Andrew felt a rush of secondhand embarrassment. He could never handle it when Tiana got this bold.

Luckily, Shiloh strolled in right then, humming and singing cheerfully.

"Burn, calories, burn! My worst enemy, my biggest fear, watch 'em disappear! Average me? Still a queen. Average you? Barely seen!"

Truth be told, for someone pushing several centuries, Shiloh actually had a pretty decent singing voice.

Tiana gritted her teeth, "Andy, I'm out of here! I've got no patience for that lunatic girl!"

And just like that, she bolted out the door.

Ever since witnessing Shiloh's terrifying Strength firsthand, Tiana had developed a deep, instinctive fear of her. She still had no idea where Andrew had picked up such a beast of a woman. S to'

As soon as she walked in and saw Andrew, Shiloh stopped singing and looked deeply troubled. "Andrew, I had another nightmare last night."

Andrew raised a brow. "What did you dream about? Tell me, and I'll break it down for you."

Shiloh whispered, "Same as before. Just scattered images. In the dream, I saw that same man again, and a village engulfed in flames... then I woke up."

Andrew said nothing. There was something inside Shiloh that was starting to stir.

Whether it was the ageless

syndrome acting up or the amnesia resurfacing, her condition was

clearly showing signs of deterioration. Hence, he needed to do something soon. But first he had to finish handling the Ulrich family matters.

"Shiloh, don't worry. Give me a couple of days, and I'll start working on your treatment," Andrew assured her gently.

Shiloh nodded and smiled. "It's okay.

I just wanted to tell you-that's all.

Nothing else is bothering me.

Andrew, the more I get to know you, the more I realize you're a good guy. Someone I can really trust and feel safe around."

Andrew laughed. "Hey, I've always been a good guy, alright?"

Shiloh made a face. "I'm done talking to you. I'm going to take a shower and get some rest. I've got a side gig tonight."

Andrew grinned. "So, Shiloh, how much have you saved up by now?"

Shiloh instantly looked defensive and started backing away. "Why do you wanna know that? I'm not telling you!"

Andrew surrendered. "Alright, alright. I won't ask. Go take your shower and get some rest, okay?"

Chapter 1737

Shortly after, Andrew made his way to the Gabo Creek Chamber of Commerce headquarters.

Ryder was already waiting. The moment he saw Andrew, he rushed over and said, "Mr. Lloyd, my dad's planning to come after you!"

Standing beside him, Rachel snapped, "Unless he has a death wish, Mason wouldn't dare!"

Andrew calmly raised his hand. "No need for the dramatics. It was expected. Go on. What have you found out? Let's hear it."

Ryder spoke quickly. "Mr. Byrne personally visited my father at the Ulrich residence. He asked my dad to set up a private meeting with you. Then, Mr. Byrne plans to make his move against you himself."

A sharp glint flashed through Andrew's eyes.

Marcelo again? The man just did not know when to quit.

He ordered, "Rachel, get the car ready. Since they want to play games, I'll play a big one with them."

Rachel trembled nervously. "Mr. Lloyd, are you planning to confront them directly?"

A playful expression appeared in Andrew's eyes. "Of course, I'm not afraid of direct confrontation, but I prefer to operate quietly behind the scenes."

By now, Andrew has fully established himself in Blumedale. First, there was Shiloh, his "nuclear option" backup plan, and second, he had Victoria's powerful backing to rely on.

He never expected that his father's old flings would end up becoming his greatest assets.

And honestly? He could not say it did not feel satisfying.

With Tiana and Victoria both backing him up, even going toe-to-toe with the Three Titans no longer felt like a stretch.

Moreover, Victoria's strength was immeasurable. With his second seal still unbroken, having her as his anchor gave him the upper hand.

As for the Driscoll family, the full picture was not clear yet.

Nonetheless, it was easy to guess that after knocking Joe off his pedestal and humiliating Walter, the Driscolls were not about to let it slide. They were known for being ruthless and vindictive. Thus,

retaliation was only a matter of time. Content

Then, there were the Haywoods. His feud with them was now carved in stone.

Andrew had already taken out Seth, and now he had humiliated Xavier, the Haywoods' golden boy. It was almost certain that the Haywoods were out for blood by now.

In addition, the three underworld kings of Blumedale were slowly beginning to surface, each one sizing up the shifting tides.

And let's not forget the cult that had brainwashed Mason into targeting him. Their so-called Voice of the Oracle had already died by Andrew's hand, so they would likely send more trouble his way.

Andrew could feel something huge was brewing, and a full-blown storm was about to erupt in Gabo Creek. He probably should have asked Victoria earlier if she knew anything about the forces connected to the red serpent.

When he killed Nathan, Andrew clearly remembered the red serpent tattoo on the man's shaved head.

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Onyx Serpent Bar was located in the heart of Blumedale's red-light district. It was one of the city's most notorious underground clubs.

By now, it was 6 p.m., and the crowd had begun to pour in. Wannabe thugs and

fake gangsters swaggering in with barely-dressed women clinging to their arms.

A stretch black Mercedes slowly pulled up and parked sideways right. in front of the entrance, instantly drawing attention. The door swung open, and Andrew stepped out, adjusting the cuffs of his suit.

Voluptuous and radiant as ever, Rachel followed behind with a confident sway.

No one else was with them.

A few cocky young men swaggered over, all sleeveless, tatted up, and carrying themselves like they owned the street.

One of them slapped the hood of the stretch Benz and barked, "Who the hell are you country bumpkins? Rented this ride just to show off, huh? Move this piece of junk, or we'll smash it to pieces!"

Rachel let out a cold laugh. "Try it. Go ahead, smash it and see what happens. Back off. Mr. Lloyd is here to see your boss, the Dragon King."

Chapter 1738

The group of young men froze for a moment, then their expressions shifted to full alert.

"Dragon King? Never heard of him. Get lost."

"Last warning-move your car or we'll smash it!"

Andrew raised an eyebrow and said calmly, "Isn't the infamous Onyx Dragon King of Blumedale always holed up in this Onyx Serpent Bar?"

Before the lead thug could spit out more nonsense, Andrew planted a hand on his face and shoved him aside effortlessly. The guy roared in anger, reaching for his baseball bat.

Andrew pointed right at his nose, voice icy. "Scram. Get in my way again, and I'll bulldoze this trash bar into the ground."

The pressure that suddenly burst from Andrew's presence made the group of bouncers feel dry-mouthed and paralyzed, unable to take a step. Powerful figures who had long operated within elite circles naturally carried a sense of dominance.

Andrew was exactly that kind of man, and he did not need to bare his fangs or scream threats. Just a flicker of attitude was enough to make most people fold.

The nearby patrons gawked in hushed amazement as Andrew walked straight through the front doors of the bar.

"Who the hell is that guy? He's bold as hell!"

"I've never seen anyone act that cocky in Onyx Serpent Bar before."

"He doesn't look like a nobody. He's still young, but that aura? No way a random punk could fake that."

"I don't know the guy, but the woman behind him is Madam Rachel Gardner. She's on the Gabo Creek rich list and a total powerhouse!"

The murmurs rippled through the room.

A few heavily made-up women were already eying the duo, mentally calculating how to seduce Andrew.

...

Inside the bar, Andrew glanced around before casually taking a seat at the counter. He did not even glance at the near-naked dancers grinding in the center of the dance floor.

The couple next to him, who had been making out, quickly separated and scooted away with visible discomfort.

Andrew chuckled and asked Rachel, "Do I really look that scary?"

Rachel grinned. "Mr. Lloyd, you? Scary? No way! You're practically adorable.

Well, unless someone doesn't know who you are. Then yeah, different story. This bar is Onyx Dragon King's turf. But hardly anyone knows that. Those who do never dare stir up trouble here."

She explained, "That's why those thugs earlier were so stunned. Not many people would dare call their bluff like you did."

Andrew smirked and glanced behind the bar.

A scruffy-looking bartender with bleached yellow hair, a cigarette dangling from his lips, asked grumpily, "What'll you have?"

Andrew tilted his head toward Rachel. "Ladies first. What would you like?"

Rachel smiled sweetly, clearly flattered by the gesture. "In that case... I'll take a glass of Martell."

Andrew snapped his fingers. "One Martell for the lady. I'll have a glass of plain water."

Tommy Carson, the bartender, was annoyed. "I'm sorry, but this is a bar, not a retirement home. If you want i water, get it elsewher

Andrew's smile widened. "But what if I insist on plain water?"

The bartender sneered. "Are you looking for trouble? You really think you can just roll into Onyx Serpent Bar and pull this crap?"

Andrew's tone remained friendly. "Sure, sure. Your bar, your rules. In that case, I'll change my order. How about this one?"

Tommy scoffed. "Knew you were all bark. Freakin' poser."

He leaned in, trying to read the menu and see what Andrew picked. However, Andrew suddenly reached out and clamped his hand around the bartender's neck.

Tommy shouted, "Are you insane, you piece of—"

His muscles tensed as he tried to fight back across the bar, simultaneously reaching for a bottle behind him.

Rachel screamed, stumbling back in shock. She had not expected Andrew to snap so suddenly.

The bottle never landed.

Andrew caught it with his other hand, then yanked it out of Tommy's grasp and slammed it down on his head.

Glass shattered, and ooze and blood

ran down Tommy's face as he

out a

I cry of pain. "You!

kill you!" Content Belongs

He struggled to break free, but could not.

Andrew had him pinned with just one arm, holding him against the counter like a

helpless little bird, utterly unable to move.

Chapter 1739

With his other hand, Andrew reached behind the bar and pulled out a black handgun.

Rachel gasped. "Mr. Lloyd, that's..."

Andrew replied calmly, "Oldest trick in the book. Posing as a bartender while hiding a weapon. It's meant for sneak attacks, a standard setup in places crawling

with organized crime. Pretty boring, honestly."

He clicked his tongue and casually ejected the magazine. By now, the clubgoers

had begun to notice the commotion.

Not even the pounding music could drown out the tension as all eyes turned to

Andrew, their faces filled with shock.

The group of punks from earlier returned, this time led by a man in a black suit,

striding over with menace in his eyes.

"Let go of our guy and get the hell out of Onyx Serpent Bar! Or I swear, I don't care who you are—you won't leave in one piece!"

The suited man radiated killing intent as he shouted his warning.

Andrew glanced at him. "Are you the Onyx Dragon King?"

The man's eye twitched as he barked, "Does it matter? I said let go of him, now!"

With one brutal smash of the pistol grip, Andrew knocked Tommy out cold.

The guy in the black suit exploded in rage. "You son of a bitch. You're dead!"

He motioned for his men to surround Andrew. However, with a flick of his foot, the

magazine that had landed on the ground flipped into the air.

Andrew caught it mid-spin, slapped it into the gun with a flick of his wrist, and completed the reload in a smooth motion.

The flashy move left the men stunned, just long enough for Andrew to jam the cold barrel straight into the black-suited man's mouth.

"So, can I meet the Onyx Dragon King now? Or would you prefer your brains splattered across the wall?"

The man's throat moved involuntarily as veins bulged on his neck and hands. It

was hard to tell whether he was trembling from rage or terror.

He mumbled a defiant growl. "If you've got the guts, pull the trigger!"

Andrew narrowed his eyes and thumbed the safety off.

The man's eyes went wide. "Wait, wait, wait! Sir, please—don't! I'll take you to the

Dragon King! Right now!"

Smiling faintly, Andrew lowered the

gun and holstered it. "See? That

wasn't so hard. You people really love pushing your luck. I swear, you're just begging for a beatdown."

Rachel stood frozen to the side, her scalp tingling.

Andrew was insane and ruthless.

This was the Onyx Dragon King's territory.

Of Blumedale's three underground

bosses—Onyx Dragon King, or

Ronald Potter—was known as the

most brutal and bloodthirsty. He

was the only one bold enough to

publicly declare himself part of the

underworld.

Even people like Derek sometimes turned a blind eye when it came to him, and

the Five Apex Families had to swallow their pride when dealing with the Dragon

King.

But Andrew? He strolled in on his first visit and responded to aggression with brute force.

Rachel did not even want to imagine what kind of fury would erupt once Ronald

found out.

The man in the black suit walked ahead, bitterness all over his face.

"You may be the chairman of Gabo Creek's Chamber of Commerce and pretty strong, but Mr. Potter won't let this slide. No way he's gonna let you walk out after this mess."

Andrew's smile had long vanished. "Just lead the way. One more word, and I'll shoot you right here."

The man clamped his mouth shut. Though his face burned with indignation, he didn't dare make another sound.

Inside, however, he was seething. He had followed the Onyx Dragon King for years, but he had never seen anyone act this arrogantly on their turf.

As they disappeared from view, the bar burst into chaos, gossip flying like wildfire.

"Holy hell, that guy was insane! That move with the gun gave me chills. Was that real combat technique?"

"Sure, it looked cool, but it's not practical. You guys are forgetting whose place this is."

"Young dudes, especially cocky ones, always want to prove themselves. But that

one's just nuts. With Mr. Potter's temper, he'll probably rip him in half!"

"I've never seen anyone act like that inside the Onyx Serpent Bar. Mr. Potter is

surely going to break that man's leg."

Chapter 1740

The third floor of the bar was a whole different world, hidden behind reinforced steel was a secret chamber.

Led by the man in the black suit, Andrew and Rachel stepped inside.

Rachel's face had gone pale, but Andrew remained completely calm and collected.

"Sir, this guy insisted on seeing you!" the man growled as soon as they entered.

At the far end of the chamber sat a massive black throne chair. Seated on it was a burly, broad-shouldered man with a thick beard and dark, blotchy skin. His sharp, beast-like eyes gleamed with danger at every twitch.

This was Ronald, known throughout Blumedale as the Onyx Dragon King, ranked on par with Marcelo. The black blotches that covered his face gave him his name, a title he only earned after making a name for himself.

Before that, people called him Onyx Serpent, a name not nearly as dignified.

"Wow. What an impressive spirit from the younger generation. Mr. Lloyd, you weren't born in Blumedale, and I've never heard of you in Holtrien's southern martial scene either. But you showed up here just a few months ago and built

an empire from scratch? That's something to admire," Ronald said with a cold glint in his eyes and a fake smile.

Andrew responded casually, "I appreciate the compliment, sir. But compared to your reputation, my small accomplishments don't amount to much."

Ronald let out a hearty laugh. "Nonsense! You're a rising legend now! Otherwise, how else would you dare barge into my turf, loud and proud? Had me thinking maybe you already took over all of Blumedale. Got me shaking in my boots, afraid to even breathe."

Though the words were polite, the tone turned darker with each sentence.

Without needing a command, 23 men seated nearby immediately stood, drawing their weapons and surrounding Andrew.

In an instant, dozens of gun barrels pointed right at him.

Rachel trembled from head to toe, nearly on the verge of tears. "Dragon King, please don't! Let's talk this through!"

Ronald's eyes narrowed, his tone murderous. "Talk? Talk, my ass! This little punk dares to stir trouble on my turf? Fine! Since he's so fearless, I'll show him what a real tiger's bite feels like!"

Yet, Andrew remained unfazed. He said flatly, "Dragon King, this isn't exactly how you treat a guest."

Ronald froze, then burst out laughing and turned to his men. "Did you all hear what this kid just said? He wants me to treat him like a guest! That's rich!"

His men laughed mockingly, their faces full of disdain.

"Who the hell does this guy think he is?"

"Does he think he's Mr. Keller Senior? Or some big name like Governor McCormick?"

"Sir, quit wasting breath and just end him already!"

Ronald

the power and the loyalty of the killers

Soaking it in. He loved

t his command, the net

g was under his control.

He turned back to Andrew, ready to crush him with pure intimidation.

However,

what he saw made his smile falter.

Andrew's face had not changed at all.

There was no fear or anxiety. In fact, he looked bored.

Like this was not a life-or-death standoff, but a tedious waste of time.

Ronald's expression darkened. "Andrew, do you even realize you're one breath away from death?"

Andrew shrugged. "One breath away? Then go ahead. Give the order and have me shot."

Ronald's eyes narrowed, then he

barked out a twisted laugh. "You et

think I won't do it?" Do you

little power trip works for turf, you respect me or you die!"

, you respect me or your

Andrew rolled his eyes. "You talk too much. If you've got the guts, tell them to pull the trigger already."

As he spoke, he leaned forward,
placing his forehead right against
the nearest barrel, expression daring and fearless.

The men hesitated, and their faces twitched. They looked at each other,
unsure.

They did not know how to handle someone this insane.

One of them finally shouted, "Sir! Say the word, I'll kill this bastard right now!"