

RISING FROM THE ASHES (ANDREW AND LAUREN)

Chapter 1741

Andrew shouted along, "Yes, that's right! Mr. Potter, go ahead and listen to that dumbass lackey of yours and order them to beat me to death right now! But you'd better be ready, for you and your whole operation are going to be wiped off the face of the earth."

He continued, "Not just you, but your family, your people, everything you've built.

If even one of you survives, I'll take your last name."

Ronald's expression shifted, caught between confusion and unease.

His men started yelling, urging him not to fall for Andrew's bluff.

However, Ronald stayed silent, staring hard at Andrew.

After a long moment, he finally spoke in a menacing tone, "Andrew, what exactly are you trying to do by coming here?"

Andrew sneered and knocked away several guns pointed at him. The gunmen were all furious, but before they could react, he had already lunged forward and delivered several loud slaps across their faces.

Immediately, five tough guys clutched their swollen cheeks, filled with anger, wanting nothing more than to devour Andrew as they roared in fury.

"Sir, this bastard has gone too far!"

This guy absolutely has to die! Kill him!"

"He's mouthing off right in front of you! Are we just going to let him walk all over us?"

Ronald was seething. He shot up from his black leather throne, pointing a trembling finger at Andrew as his voice turned deadly cold.

"Unless you explain yourself right now, I swear I'll make sure you leave here in pieces! I don't care how many big shots are backing you; I'll still crush you myself!"

Andrew snorted and fired back, "Don't you think I've earned the right to sit down and talk with you?"

Ronald grumbled begrudgingly, "Of course you have. I've already acknowledged that you've made a name for yourself. Whether I like it or not, I can't pretend you don't deserve some respect."

Andrew's tone stayed sharp. "Then that's all I'm asking for. I came here to talk business with you, Mr. Potter, so who the hell gave your goons the right to act tough in front of me? I slapped them, so what? If someone on my side started disrespecting you like that, would you sit back and smile?"

Ronald paused, his words caught in his throat.

The men Andrew had slapped were still fuming, but they could only grit their teeth and swallow their pride.

Andrew strolled over to the couch, sat down like he owned the place, and crossed his legs with ease.

Rachel watched him with wide eyes, completely in awe. She thought, 'Now that's what it means to have true boss energy.'

Andrew pointed at a hulking man nearby and casually ordered, "Go get me a cup of tea. I want Earl Grey."

The man covered in tattoos and rippling with muscle was one of Ronald's most trusted lieutenants. The second he heard the request, his face twisted in disbelief as he barked, "You want me to make you tea? You think I'm your damn servant?"

Andrew looked at him calmly. "I think you're a nobody. What, got a problem with that?"

The man's face flushed deep red, and his fists clenched until his knuckles cracked.

However, he did not make a move. Instead, he just glanced at Ronald, waiting for his signal.

Ronald felt a headache coming on and finally waved his hand. "Go. Just make the damn tea for Mr. Lloyd. It's not worth making a scene, so just suck it up."

The burly man let out a frustrated roar but obediently went to make the tea.

Ronald gave a bitter laugh and turned to Andrew. "Happy now, Mr. Lloyd? After making such a big scene, can we finally talk business?"

Andrew got straight to the point, "You know Victoria Sanchez, right?"

Ronald was confused, then replied in a muffled voice, "The Peck family matriarch, a legendary woman-who doesn't know her! But why are you bringing up that tough lady out of nowhere?"

Andrew chuckled darkly. "Sir, watch your mouth. Victoria adores me; she's practically like an aunt to me. If I told her exactly what you just said, I don't think things would end well for you."

Ronald's eyes went wide, his tongue practically tripping over itself. "Wait... what? -You're saying Mrs. Peck is close with you? Oh, w-what I said earlier was just a slip of the tongue. Please don't take it seriously!"

Andrew smiled mysteriously, keeping things vague as he said, "I can't reveal too much! I can only say that you're very lucky! You just dodged a bullet! Everyone always thinks my backing comes from the Keller family or Governor McCormick.

"But actually, those are just part of it! The beautiful and gentle Victoria is my biggest support! She's the one who sent me to find you, saying you've got a big temper and love to show off. But as long as I mention her name, you'll obediently listen! And if you don't listen, then I'll go back and tell her, and she'll pay you a personal visit."

Ronald flashed a wry smile. "Why didn't you say earlier that you and Mrs. Peck have that kind of relationship? She's someone I have complete respect for. Since she sent you here, then whatever it is, I'll handle it perfectly for you, how about that?"

His attitude had completely flipped 180 degrees from before.

Andrew found it amusing and somewhat surprising.

Victoria's reputation apparently carried serious weight in the underworld, too. He had just mentioned her name casually to test Ronald's attitude. He never expected the guy to react like a mouse meeting a cat, practically ready to get on his knees.

Meanwhile, Ronald's other men had all tucked their tails between their legs, their faces turning respectful. Without a doubt, they had all suffered at Victoria's hands before.

This made Andrew's task much simpler.

He got straight to the point and said, "I'm planning to destroy Marcelo, the Azure Dragon King. At the very least, I want to seriously hurt him. Are you interested?"

As soon as he said this, Ronald's brow furrowed deeply. "Don't try to trap me! Marcelo is also an underworld Dragon King in Blumedale. You came to me just to get me to help you fight him?"

He huffed and added, "If that's the case, then sorry, I can't help you!"

Andrew asked, "What if I bring in some other people? Would you have the guts and courage to get involved?"

Ronald leaned back, looking

completely at ease. "Andy, I'll admit your backing is impressive! But honestly speaking, you personally? You're too young and naive. Blumedale's underworld has three powers in balance, three Dragon Kings, each controlling their own territory and forces!

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"This situation has lasted for many years. Behind the scenes, none of us can really defeat the others! And you think a few words can change Blumedale's underworld situation! Let me say something that might upset you you're overestimating yourself!"

Rachel looked displeased and asked, "Mr. Potter, are you looking down on Mr. Lloyd?"

Ronald smiled, "Saying I look down on him would be disrespectful to him. But he's being a bit too idealistic, that's true."

Rachel was about to say more when Andrew waved his hand. "It's fine!

Since Mr. Rotter can't see the golden opportunity right in front of him, we'll just find someone else. We came here to offer him a fortune, and he treats it like we're dreaming. Mr. Potter, forget the tea-I'mout."

To everyone's surprise, Andrew did not say another word and stood up, ready to leave.

Ronald looked torn and called out quickly, "Won't you stay a little longer? I mean, yeah, maybe that plan of yours is a stretch, but that doesn't mean we can't work together in other ways."

Now that he knew Andrew had ties to Victoria, Ronald was already thinking about how to pull him into his circle.

Andrew chuckled. "No need. I'm going to see White Dragon King next."

The White Dragon King was the last of Blumedale's three underworld Dragon Kings.

Ronald looked stunned and asked, "Andrew, are you really going after Marcelo? Among the three Dragon Kings, he's the most difficult to deal with. His people have nothing to lose. That guy is no easy target!"

Andrew shrugged. "That doesn't mean he's impossible to handle."

Chapter 1743

Andrew said, "If you think it's impossible to handle Marcelo, that just means you're weak. But me? I'll destroy those people you can't defeat. What you think is

impossible? I'm going to make it happen. Marcelo and I are past the point of no return. I won't stop until he bleeds."

Ronald felt a cold sweat drip down his palm as he saw the icy glint in Andrew's eyes.

This guy was seriously ruthless.

Ronald had spent half a lifetime building what he had today, yet even he never dared consider going after Marcelo.

But this guy? He did not even blink. He was going to take Marcelo head-on.

Was this what the underground scene in Blumedale had come to?

Were the Dragon Kings no longer feared?

"Since we're talking this far already, what exactly are you planning to do?"

Ronald asked, his expression now serious.

He could not get a read on Andrew, but what scared him more was the possibility that Andrew really could pull this off. And if Marcelo went down, then his decision today would look very foolish in hindsight.

Andrew smiled. "It's simple. I'll rally multiple forces, hit him from all sides, and split the spoils. You wouldn't be going in alone. If I can bring in White Dragon King, some of the elite families, and a few people on the government side to help me cover things up and handle the surface work...

"When that happens, tell me how many lives do you think Marcelo has to fight that off?"

Looking at Andrew's seemingly harmless but actually ice-cold smile, Ronald fell silent. He just felt his throat tighten as cold sweat poured down his back.

"Do you really have that kind of power to pull all these forces together for joint action?" he asked, his voice dry.

Andrew said nothing more. He simply turned with Rachel and headed out. His voice floated back with a quiet confidence. "Don't forget about Victoria! She said that if you're too proud to play along, she'll come down here herself and handle you."

Ronald bolted to his feet, scrambling to catch up with a strained smile.

"Hey, if she already gave her

then that changes everything!

Alright, I'm in. I'll back you up on this. As long as you get White Dragon King and the others onboard, I'll be your first man on the frontlines."

Andrew grinned. Victoria's name really was a golden ticket.

He made a mental note that he was going to keep holding tight to that fine, dangerous beauty.

And with that, Andrew was gone.

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Inside the hidden room, Ronald stood still. His men looked at him, waiting for his reaction.

"Sir, what if he's playing us?" one of them asked cautiously.

Ronald slowly shook his head. "Doesn't seem like it. Victoria's name isn't something you just throw around. If he's pretending, she'll personally break him before I ever get the chance."

Another man spoke up. "But he's going after Marcelo. Marcelo's the kind of guy who'd take on the Five Apex Families without flinching. Do we really want to get involved and bring all that heat down on ourselves?"

Ronald did not answer immediately. He exhaled deeply and said, "But what if he actually pulls it off? What if he gets everyone together and wipes Marcelo out? Then what? Are we in or out?"

His men looked at each other, hesitation all over their faces.

One man snorted. "Come on, that's impossible. He acts like he's one of the Three Titans or something. Even they don't have that kind of influence anymore."

Ronald stared up at the ceiling, muttering to himself, "You never know. He might just become the next George Keller, or even Maurice Driscoll. It's been

years since Blumedale saw someone bold enough to play at this level. Maybe it's time we followed him and carved out a fat piece of the pie."

the wrong enemy."

He added, "Marcelo's had a lifetime of success, but this time... he might've picked

Chapter 1744

On a quiet street, inside a plain-looking tea lounge, a man in a tailored teal shirt walked in with a man and a woman trailing behind him.

All three carried a calm but commanding presence as they stepped through the door.

The tea house owner rushed over with a beaming smile and a deep bow. "Sir, you've arrived!"

The man in teal gave a light smile. "Mm. Has the person I'm meeting shown up?"

The owner nodded repeatedly. "Yes, Mr. Ulrich is already inside, waiting at your usual spot, Mr. Byrne."

Marcelo nodded and walked toward the private rooms with his two trusted aides.

The woman beside him sneered. "Mr. Byrne, Mason is nothing but a spineless coward. Total dead weight. Teaming up with him is honestly beneath us."

Marcelo replied with a warm smile. "Using people isn't about status, it's about suitability. Sure, Mason is nothing more than an insect to me. But if he can help lure Andrew into the trap, then he's done his job."

The man behind them chuckled. "Springflow, we should take Mr. Byrne's words to heart. Even a single sentence might benefit us for the rest of our lives."

Springflow, now humbled, nodded respectfully. "You're right, Highmist. I'll pay more attention to what Mr. Byrne says from now on."

Marcelo smiled, pleased with the caliber of talent surrounding him. He believed that taking care of Andrew would be effortless. Nonetheless, he had far bigger plans in motion for what would come after that.

Mason and Ryder were already waiting inside the secluded VIP room. Both stood up immediately with respectful expressions.

Marcelo waved his hand. "No need for formalities. Sit."

Mason carefully took his seat, his posture rigid and proper. Ryder remained standing quietly beside him, eyes lowered.

The woman, Springflow, spoke coldly. "Mr. Ulrich, what's the meaning of this? This was supposed to be a private meeting. Why did you bring an outsider?"

Mason quickly explained, "This is my son. He's not an outsider. And you may not know this, but he's currently working directly under Andrew. Anything Andrew does, he reports back to me."

Marcelo's sharp gaze immediately turned to Ryder. "Oh? You're working under Andrew?"

Ryder answered respectfully, "Yes, Mr. Byrne."

Marcelo gave a slow nod and smiled. "Not bad. Earning Andrew's trust is no small feat. So, what's he been up to lately?"

Ryder replied at once, "He's trying to manage the public backlash from the Ulrich family scandal. But that's all for show. Honestly, he doesn't care much about the Ulrich name. Behind the scenes, he's been staying

alert.

alert.

"He suspects you might make a move on him, so he's rushing to train his people. He's also trying to deepen his ties with the Keller family for extra protection. And at the same time, he's actively working on government connections, hoping for some political cover."

Marcelo nodded slowly. "Mm, that lines up pretty well with what I've already heard. Looks like you really are in Andrew's inner circle, and a sharp one at that, if you've uncovered this much."

Ryder exhaled quietly in relief. Everything he said had been fed to him by Andrew in advance.

Andrew had already predicted Marcelo would ask about his movements and gave Ryder the exact script to follow.

In that moment, Ryder's feelings toward Andrew deepened, part awe, part fear.

He thought Andrew's foresight was terrifying. He even knew what Marcelo was planning.

If Ryder ever truly ended up working under Andrew, he would have to be damn careful.

Chapter 1745

Ryder was far from experiencing Marcelo's true caution. The latter waved his hand and ordered, "Springflow, search him! Highmist, check his phone!"

Immediately, despite Ryder's resistance, he was pressed down on the table for a body search!

Meanwhile, Highmist took out his phone and began checking it.

Springflow released him and said coldly, "Sir, there's nothing on him."

Highmist handed the phone back. "Sir, the phone's clean."

Only then did Marcelo offer a genuine smile as he looked at Ryder. "Alright, now I believe you're not a mole for Andrew. Mason, we can begin our conversation now."

Ryder was drenched in cold sweat, his back soaked. Once again, he felt a deep sense of relief.

Andrew had gone through that phone beforehand. If not, he might have been exposed, and the cost for that could have been his life.

Mason spoke in a serious tone. "Mr. Byrne, I need to make this clear. If you plan to kill Andrew, I won't be much help."

Marcelo waved it off indifferently. "I don't need your help. You wouldn't be capable of much anyway. All I need is for you to create the right opportunity."

Mason exhaled in relief and asked, "What exactly do you want me to do?"

Marcelo took a sip of tea before replying calmly. "It's simple. On the day Cillian is laid to rest, while Andrew drops his guard, I'll take him out. Albyou have to do is make sure he shows up, and do what you can to keep unnecessary people away."

Mason thought for a moment, then nodded. "That won't be hard. As the chairman, if I extend a personal invitation to Andrew for my father's burial he'll come out of respect. And I'll make sure he's the only one invited, no outsiders from the Ulrich circle or beyond. Will that be enough?"

Marcelo set down his cup and smiled as he stood. "Perfect. Let's go with that."

With that, he turned and left without wasting another word on the father and son.

Ryder scowled. "He's such a damn snob. He's only getting this shot at Andrew because of us, and he doesn't even bother saying thank you!"

Mason spoke calmly. "Relax. Don't take it personally. In his eyes, we're nothing but insects, not worth a second thought. But even insects can bite when the time's right. Marcelo and Andrew are both dangerous in their own spoet

When

two tigers fight, both will end up bleeding. That's exactly the kind of chaos we need."

Ryder sneered. "So, Andrew's really about to go down, huh?"

Mason grinned. "Of course he is. And remember not to breathe a word about what happened today. The moment Andrew falls, the Ulrich family will finally have its chance to rise."

Ryder glanced at Mason and asked cautiously, "Dad, are you eyeing Andrew's position as chairman?"

Mason gave a sly smile but said nothing more. Of course, he was. Nathan had already promised that once Andrew was out, he would take his place.

Ryder looked at his father's smug expression and could not help but roll his eyes internally.

He thought, 'Keep dreaming, old man! When you go down, I'll be the head of the Ulrich family. Mr. Lloyd's already waiting for you and Marcelo to take the bait.'