

RISING FROM THE ASHES (ANDREW AND LAUREN)

Chapter 1746

"Mr. Lloyd, the Dragon King requests your presence."

A sultry woman, dressed to tease, gave a seductive smile as she lowered her head in invitation, intentionally revealing a deep line of cleavage.

Andrew did not hesitate. He strode boldly into the extravagant hall, completely unfazed.

Rachel followed, uneasy. "Mr. Lloyd, doesn't it feel suspicious that the White Dragon King is being this friendly?"

Andrew replied flatly, "Relax. He wouldn't dare try anything."

Rachel stayed quiet, but admiration filled her eyes. Andrew's nerve was something else.

The three Dragon Kings were notorious figures in Blumedale's underworld, each more dangerous than the last. Yet, Andrew had shown up alone, completely unarmed, and walked in like he owned the place.

White Dragon King sat at the far end of the hall. He was a pale-skinned man in a white tailored suit, sipping red wine. His crimson leather shoes stood out as he lounged back in a modern office chair with one leg crossed.

He looked about Andrew's age, with a handsome but androgynous face, and a wicked glint in his eye.

Two scantily clad women flanked him, massaging his shoulders.

"Mr. Lloyd, welcome. Please, take a seat," White Dragon King said, raising his glass with a charismatic smile.

Andrew did not stand on ceremony. He walked right up and took a seat across from him.

Rachel hesitated at first, clearly nervous, but Andrew smiled at her. "Sit down. It's fine."

Only then did she sit, casting a grateful look toward him. After all, even though she was a wealthy socialite in Blumedale, in the eyes of these underground power players, she was just a walking purse.

To them, her presence barely registered.

"Mr. Lloyd, you're unusually kind to those under you," White Dragon King remarked with a half-smirk. "This lady's got a killer figure, powerful aura, and a mountain of money. You've got some real luck on your side."

Andrew remained calm. "Let's skip the flattery and get to business."

White Dragon King-real name Aaron Nicholls-was known as the weakest of the three Dragon Kings. However, rumor had it he was backed by someone powerful, which allowed him to strut around Blumedale with no one daring to cross him.

Aaron chuckled. "Business? Mr. Lloyd, you're the one who came to me. You brought up 'business', so go ahead. What do you want?"

He took another sip of wine, the glint in his eyes full of mischief.

Andrew frowned. "Cut the act. I'm sure your people saw me leave Mr. Potter's place earlier. I know you both don't get along. That's none of my business. I came here for one question, and one question only."

Aaron let out a cold snort and set his
it a cold

wine glass down with a thud. "Mr.

Lloyd, you have already met with

Ronald. So why bother coming.

things you went to him firstt

me? There's a natural order to

then came to me. Let's be real. You're looking down on me. So, whatever you say today doesn't

matter. This conversation is over."

Andrew remained unfazed. "If we're done, then why did your people invite me in?"

Aaron flashed a

da sinister grin.

"Because I wanted to ask you some

questions, Mr. Lloyd. I want to know

exactly what you and Ronald talked about 'm very curious. You seem like a smart man. Tell me everything, and I'll let you walk out of here. But if you don't... we might have a little 'conflict'."

As he spoke, black-suited enforcers swarmed into the hall, surrounding them like wolves ready to pounce.

Rachel's face went pale. She clenched her fists but did not dare speak up.

From the beginning, she knew that none of the three Dragon Kings were easy to deal with.

Ronald had already proven how aggressive he could be, and now Aaron was showing he was just as bad, if not worse.

One wrong move here and they could be done for.

Her eyes darted toward Andrew, but he looked completely unfazed.

"Mr. Nicholls, are you really planning to make a move?"

Aaron stood from his chair and walked slowly toward him, looking at him condescendingly.

"Mr. Lloyd, maybe you don't really know what kind of person I am."

Chapter 1747

Aaron said coldly, "Among the three Dragon Kings of Blumedale's underworld, I

may not have the largest operation, but that just means I'm the boldest and most ruthless. So, if I want answers, you'd better spill them fast and clean. Because once I run out of patience, Mr. Lloyd, your pretty face might not leave this place in one piece."

Around them, his henchmen narrowed their eyes, radiating menace as they closed in.

Andrew sighed and rubbed his temple. "You underworld guys... Why is it always threats, violence, and waving guns around with you guys? Listen closely-my backing is serious. You don't want to mess with me."

Aaron blinked, then burst into mocking laughter. "Did you hit your head? Got so scared you lost your mind, maybe? You think I'd dare order you around if I was worried about who's behind you?"

The two women massaging him giggled coldly.

"Please, Mr. Nicholls doesn't care about your so-called powerful connections. Even Governor McCormick doesn't faze him. You want to throw around names in front of him? Might as well run headfirst into a wall."

Aaron gave Andrew a mocking smile and casually walked around behind him, patting him on the shoulder.

"Come on-time to face reality. Before showing up here, you should've done your homework. I might be the least experienced of the three Dragon Kings, sure. But my backer? He's so powerful, your people would be nothing but pawns in his eyes."

Andrew raised a brow. "Oh? So you're telling me, you don't even flinch at the Keller family or Governor McCormick? Alright then... how about the Peck family?" Aaron scoffed. "Andrew, are you dumb or what? If I don't fear the Keller family or Derek, why would I give a damn about the Peck family that's ranked dead last among the Five Apex Families? Don't be ridiculous."

Andrew grinned, shaking his head.

"Then you're the one who's

Lnét

ridiculous. I wasn't referring to the

Peck

mily. I was talking about the

matriarch of the Peck family."

Aaron's expression froze instantly. "You mean... Victoria Sanchez? That crazy woman?"

Andrew's grin widened. "Glad you recognize her. And don't worry, I'll make sure to pass your exact words along to her. She treats me like family, after all."

Aaron's face was drained of color. "Wait... You're close to her? You two... you're related?"

Andrew smiled, his tone light but smug. "That's right. She spoils me Whatever I want, she gives it to me. Whatever I say, she listens. So congratulations, you're done."

Aaron's face twisted, and he scowled, "You little punk, you expect me to believe that crap? There's no way someone like Mrs. Peck has anything to do with you!"

Andrew casually pulled out his phone and made a call. "Oh really? Then let me show you something."

At first, Aaron snorted, thinking Andrew was putting on a show. However, when Victoria's warm, unmistakable laugh rang out from the speaker, he nearly pissed himself.

"Mr. Lloyd-Andy-sir! Let's all calm down. Let's talk this through, yeah? There's no need to involve Mrs. Peck in our little chat. Just hang up. We'll settle this ourselves. We're both men, right? We're just like brothers, really. No need to trouble a beautiful lady with this nonsense, don't you agree?"

In the blink of an eye, everyone around Andrew turned into a bunch of bootlickers,

falling over themselves to be agreeable.

That high-and-mighty act from earlier? Completely gone without a trace.

Chapter 1748

"Alright, Victoria, that's all for now," Andrew said with a grin as he ended the call.

Aaron finally let out a breath of relief. When he wiped his forehead, his palm was soaked in cold sweat.

He shot Andrew a furious glare. "Why the hell didn't you tell me earlier that you and Victoria were that close? Are you trying to get me killed, you bastard?"

Andrew shrugged. "I told you already that my backing is solid. But you brushed it off, thinking your support was tougher than mine, so I had no choice but to bring out Victoria to prove it."

Aaron ground his teeth in hatred, wanting to tear Andrew apart, but lacked the courage to! His subordinates all looked terrified, swallowing hard one after another.

Andrew was puzzled. "I thought you were supposed to be a tough guy. What are you scared of?"

With a ripping sound, Aaron tore open his shirt, revealing his muscular chest and a vicious knife scar that nearly ran across his entire torso. "See this? That's what your gentle, dear aunt left me with. And all I did was kill one of her pet dogs, and she did this to me. It was just a dog!"

His look of grievance and hatred made Andrew feel somewhat sympathetic. "Oh my, Victoria does hit pretty hard indeed! But you're a grown man with so many tough guys under you, plus your backing, surely you don't need to fear one weak woman like her?"

Aaron snapped, nearly howling in outrage. "Shut the hell up! Just shut up! Listen to me if every woman on Earth dropped dead tomorrow, that Victoria of yours still wouldn't count as a 'woman'. She didn't just slice me, she put my backer in the ICU.

"In this Gabo Creek province, I could go head-to-head with the Three Titans, no problem. But the one person I never want to cross again is Victoria. There's no one on this planet as terrifying as that woman."

Andrew was amused. He had always known Victoria was formidable, but this?

He pictured her soft voice, her elegant grace, and that slightly cool temperament.

It was hard to believe that a woman could leave a man like Aaron mentally scarred.

Aaron slumped into his seat, all his earlier arrogance drained away. "Meeting you is just my bad luck! tell me, what exactly do you want coming here? Money, territory, or women? As long as you're not being outrageous, I'll give you whatever you want. I just hope you won't bother me in the future!"

Andrew could not help but smile. Victoria's reputation was incredibly useful. Maybe he should use Victoria's reputation to go around extorting people.

Chuckling, Andrew remained calm and collected as he said, "Relax. I came to find you for pure cooperation. I'm not trying to take advantage of you!"

Aaron snorted coldly, "You have such powerful backing and still want to cooperate with me? You're not here to shake me down? You think I'll buy that nonsense?"

Andrew said, "Believe it or not, I'm here to work with you to take down Marcelo. I've already contacted Mr Potter's side. Although he didn't agree Outright, I mentioned Victoria, so I'm sure he'll be sensible. What about you? Give me an answer-are you in or out? Be quick about it."

Seeing Andrew's impatient manner, Aaron's face twitched as he gritted his teeth and asked back, "What if I say I'm not doing it? Would you be happy about that?" fo

Andrew smiled sweetly, "I wouldn't be happy, and I'd tell Victoria you're not cooperating with my work."

Aaron took a deep breath, his face full of resentment. "Well, since you've already made up your mind, why bother asking for my opinion? Just let me know the time and place. Meeting you has been nothing but bad luck!"

Andrew nodded with satisfaction. "Don't worry, I won't shortchange you. Taking down Marcelo will only benefit you. No downside to that at all."

Later, Andrew brought Rachel along as they made the rounds to a few other families.

"Don't even think about it, Andrew! We're not your lackeys and won't do your dirty work!"

"Seriously, you think you can give orders to us? Who the hell do you think you are? Andrew, you're nothing but a joke!"

"Get lost! You're not worthy of ordering us around, and you sure as hell don't deserve our cooperation."

Despite facing one harsh rejection after another, Andrew maintained his cheerful smile. Then, he dropped his bombshell.

"I think it's necessary to remind everyone that Mrs. Peck, the matriarch of the Peck family, is my dear, beloved aunt! She's the one who sent me to reach out to

all of you.

"If you all want to disrespect that, that's fine. I'll just head back and let my aunt know what you said. Get ready to receive not a legal notice... but a family-wide funeral announcement instead."

In an instant, the heads of each household, those so-called decision-makers, turned pale with panic.

"Oh no, Mr. Lloyd, you're representing Mrs. Peck? Why didn't you say so earlier?" "That settles it, then. Whatever you need, we'll give you full support!"

"Say no more! Marcelo's as good as dead. Anyone who's caught Mrs. Peck's eye is screwed. She'll rip him apart!"

"Mr. Lloyd, have you eaten? Come on and join us! Let our family host you at our hotel for a grand dinner! After this, even if you wanted to storm the president's house, our family would give you our full support..."

On the way back, Rachel's entire body trembled with excitement.

Overwhelmed

by Andrew's domineering presence and authority, she felt an almost uncontrollable urge to submit completely.

Andrew chuckled. "No need to get so worked up. I was just borrowing someone else's influence to get things done!"

Rachel flashed a seductive smile,

her voice dripping with desire. "Mr. Lloyd, I'm completely and utterly convinced by your power! If you're willing, I'd gladly offer you my body and all my assets for free!"

Andrew felt a headache coming on. "Are you being serious right now?" Rachel pushed out her chest and bit her lip provocatively. "Absolutely serious! If you trust me, I promise I'll make you feel like you're floating on cloud nine." Seeing how shamelessly seductive she looked, Andrew shook his head. "Sorry, but I'm not into walking paths that others have already walked."

Rachel giggled. "But Mr. Lloyd, every road in this world was once untraveled. It only became a path because people kept walking it."

Andrew smiled. "True enough, but I prefer carving my own road. It's smoother that way, less risk of tripping... and gives me full control, whether I move forward or pull back."

The billionaire cougar looked heartbroken. "Mr. Lloyd, I'm going to sue you for leading me on..."

Andrew looked genuinely confused. "Leading you on? Weren't we just having a serious discussion about philosophy? The more people walk a road, the smoother it gets-sure, that's logical. But don't you think forging your own path and exploring uncharted terrain brings mystery, excitement, and a fresh thrill?"

He added, "Madam Gardner, you really ought to study more philosophy. It's a deep and profound subject!"

Rachel's face darkened. "I hope when the judge questions you, Mr. Lloyd, you'll still insist we were just talking about philosophy!"

Chapter 1750

It was the start of a new day. Winter was creeping closer, and the back lawn of Serenity Villa was already covered in frost by morning.

Aspen had almost mastered the art of bone compression, and Andrew was ready to teach her real assassination techniques.

He said, "A true assassin only gets one shot. If you can't take the target down in that one moment, you've already failed. And when that happens, you're left with only two outcomes."

Andrew stood in gloves, his breath turning into mist under the icy wind.

Francesca, Lauren, Dylan, Natasha, and Aspen stood in a straight line, listening intently.

"What two outcomes?" Aspen asked curiously.

Andrew replied, "One, you get killed by the target. Two, you fail and escape immediately, saving yourself before it's too late."

Lauren scoffed. "Well, that's easy then. If the hit fails, you just run. Getting killed by the target? Not even possible! How about that, Andrew? Pretty clever, huh?"

Andrew flicked her forehead hard, making her wince and glare at him pitifully. "If you run into someone way stronger than you, do you think you can still escape after a failed attempt?"

He added, "Do you think they're just gonna stand there doing nothing? You'll be dead before you take two steps!"

Aspen asked, "Then how do I make sure I get a clean kill, every single time?"

Andrew gave her a thumbs-up. "Now that's a great question! Landing every hit perfectly sounds nearly impossible, doesn't it? Which is why you shouldn't even worry about it for now-unless you're me."

A chorus of boos broke out instantly. His three lovely companions all rolled their eyes in unison.

Andrew cleared his throat. "Back to business! Watch my movements carefully. Don't just mimic the form, but capture the essence too. If you don't, you'll be sharing my bed tonight, alone."

Aspen's face went pale as she immediately focused with all her might. After all, being alone with Andrew for a night usually left any of the women barely able to move the next day.

Francesca was training in pure combat, a different path from Aspen's stealth-focused route. Her frame, personality, and natural talent made her ideal for direct force.

So, Andrew put her through daily regimens of brutal physical conditioning and reflex sharpening. Honestly, she was a perfect fit,. especially with her already

tale

well-endowed chest growing even more impressive with each day of hard training.

Lauren had started later than the others, but her progress was unusually fast. Unlike Francesca, she was best suited for cultivating internal energy-training her@ore strength and inner power.

She looked like a delicate beauty on the outside, but if she hit someone with a palm strike, even seasoned martial artists would find their organs shaking.

Andrew once asked Tiana about her daughter's constitution, but Tiana only said Lauren was 'special' and did not elaborate further.

Nonetheless, Andrew could tell that Lauren's body was far from ordinary. The problem was that she was lazy. She only took training seriously when Andrew personally pushed her.

As for Natasha and Dylan, they continued on their original martial arts paths. Andrew could not offer them tailored regimens like the others, but he did provide guidance and an endless supply of elixirs.

Still, relying on supplements alone could only take them so far. If they wanted to become true masters, they had to put in the work themselves.

"You've got a unique training method for each of them," a voice came from behind. "You must be from some ancient, powerful martial lineage, or maybe you had some kind of incredible encounter."

Andrew turned around and scoffed. "Mr. Driscoll, what are you doing here?"

Joe stood there in his usual all-white outfit, calm as ever. "It's gotten cold. The lake froze over, so I just walked across it."

Andrew winced. "Then please... walk back the same way you came."

Lauren, Francesca, and Aspen all rushed over, laughing, eager to welcome Joe in.