

## RISING FROM THE ASHES (ANDREW AND LAUREN)

### Chapter 1766

At that moment, Andrew was sitting with Zachary.

"Ever since I got to Blumedale, I've been slammed with work. Totally forgot to come hang out with you," Andrew said with a smile.

Zachary's rugged face twisted into mock irritation. "Forgot? Please! You've just been out there flexing while leaving me in the dust!"

Andrew waved a hand. "Let's talk business. You said Luna showed up, even pulled a gun? What exactly happened?"

Zachary straightened his posture. "I came all the way to Serenity Villa just to tell you in person. Captain, that psycho woman got her eyes locked on you."

Andrew replied calmly, "She's been annoyed with me from the start. But what's that got to do with you?"

Zachary said, "She showed up at my restaurant and asked me about you. I didn't tell her anything, but when she left, her face looked like a storm was coming."

There was a pause, and Andrew asked, "You kept quiet, and in return, she pulled a gun on you. Am I right?"

Zachary's eyelid twitched, and he laughed dryly. "I mean, technically, yes. But it wasn't serious. No need for you to get pissed."

Andrew grinned. "Back when we were in the organization, you knew what kind of temper I had. I don't mess with people, and I don't take kindly to people messing with me. I've cut ties with my past. Everything's gone. I'm just living life clean now."

He added, "But still, someone always wants to dig up dirt, start trouble, push boundaries. And now we've reached the point where they're pulling guns? What a joke."

Zachary laughed nervously. "Captain, please don't smile like that. It freaks me out."

Andrew snorted. "What are you scared of? I'm not targeting you. Go back. And don't need to worry about Luna. I'll handle it."

Zachary asked carefully, "How are you planning to handle it? Can we not make it a whole thing?"

Andrew's eyes turned sharp. "If she wants to use her power to push people around, then I'll push back harder. That's how I'll handle it. Whether it turns into a big mess or not depends on her."

Zachary swallowed hard and left. He

knew Andrew was capable of anything. Luna might be a

high-ranking general and deadly in her own right. However, the man he had just spoken to was the type who would not hesitate to challenge the heavens themselves.

After a few steps, Zachary turned around and called out, "Captain, are you free on New Year's Day? January 1st..."

Andrew chuckled. "If you need help, just say it. If it's anything else, I'm not interested. Zac, I don't want you getting too close to me. The last thing I want is to see your corpse lying cold on the ground."

Zachary grinned widely, shrugging. "Dead or alive, we all go out someday. Why be

scared? Besides, those old enemies aren't going to chase me into Gabo Creek

province. At least, not anytime soon.

"On January 1st, I'm formally

entering the inner circle of the

Southern Martial Union under Jerome Thornton, the leader. I'm not too confident about my chances, so I'd like you to come along and back me up!"

Andrew nodded. "No problem."

Zachary left happily. Andrew said it was not a problem, which meant everything was locked in.

Just minutes after Zachary left, Luna arrived at Serenity Villa. Facing the tightly shut gate, Leslie frowned and stepped forward to ring the bell.

Yet, no one answered.

Leslie scoffed and yelled, "Andrew, are you in there? If you are, come open the door and welcome Ms. Phelan!"

Andrew's voice echoed from inside the house. "Sorry, nobody's home!"

Leslie froze. If no one was home, then who the hell just answered?

#### Chapter 1767

The next second, Leslie flushed with a mix of shame and rage as she realized Andrew had just played her like a fool. She stomped furiously, shouting, "Open the damn door or I'll break it down myself!"

Right then, the door swung open, and Andrew appeared. He asked, "What brings you two here?"

Andrew rubbed his ear. "Ah, my bad. I thought it was a dog barking outside. Didn't expect it to be you."

Leslie's face twisted in fury. "Did you just call me a dog?"

Andrew shrugged. "I didn't call you anything. You're the one who said it. It has nothing to do with me."

Leslie clenched her jaw, about to explode.

Just then, Luna's icy voice cut through. "That's enough."

She glanced at Andrew, still as cold as ever. "Did you find that funny?"

Andrew shrugged. "Kind of. So, Ms. Phelan, what brings you to my doorstep?"

Luna let out a faint scoff. "Two things. First, like last time, I want you to teach me alchemy. Second, I want to wipe the slate clean between us. From now on, you're with me, and you'll have free rein in all of Blumedale. That's a generous offer, wouldn't you say?"

Andrew shook his head. "Not generous enough."

Luna froze, then gave a cold, mocking laugh. "What else do you want? Greedy much? Even if I wanted to give you more, I doubt you could handle it."

Andrew grinned. "Don't worry. If you're willing to give, I can handle all of it."

Luna's expression turned to visible disgust. "Then what the hell do you want?"

Andrew did not hesitate and replied, "Get on your knees and say you were wrong. Do that, and I'll teach you alchemy."

Luna stood there, stunned. It felt almost as if her ears had betrayed her.

However, Leslie looked completely flabbergasted. She pointed at Andrew and exclaimed, "Are you insane? What kind of lunatic are you?"

Make Luna kneel? In Leslie's entire life, she had seen countless people worship, flatter, and grovel before Luna

Never had she heard someone dare say something this suicidal.

"Say that again!" Luna demanded.

An invisible pressure began to fill the air. Her pupils narrowed ever so slightly as she locked eyes with Andrew.

Andrew's gaze was just as sharp, matching her intensity without the slightest retreat.

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He repeated, "I said get on your knees and admit you were wrong and I'll consider teaching you alchemy. Did you hear me clearly this time?"

No one dared speak. The heavy pressure kept building, spreading like a storm cloud.

Leslie had gone pale, drenched in sweat. She knew this atmosphere too well, and

it was a sign that Luna was about to make a move.

She shouted in panic, "Andrew, apologize now! Otherwise, you're dead meat!"

Andrew turned his glare on her. "Shut your mouth, or I'll be happy to smash it for you."

Leslie nearly lost it. She could not believe how unhinged and unreasonable Andrew was being.

Then, without any warning,

something shot from Luna's hand. It

whizzed past Andrew's face and

slammed into a tree beside the

mansion with a brutal thud.

Luna hissed, "From this moment on, the Phelan family owes Marvin nothing. Andrew, you're on your own."

Her icy voice still echoed in the air as the military vehicle rolled away, carrying Luna and Leslie with it.

Andrew stood silently in place, his expression unreadable.

Soon, an Audi A6 pulled up slowly and stopped in front of him.

It was Chantelle, paying another unexpected visit.

Her expression was complicated as she stepped out. "You really shouldn't have provoked Ms. Phelan like that."

#### Chapter 1768

Andrew scoffed. "So what if I offended her? I've said before that pride is Luna's greatest sin. One day, it'll come back to bite her."

Chantelle shook her head. She agreed, "Pride is the deadliest sin, but before you start pointing fingers, maybe figure out who exactly is being prideful. Lucifer was prideful, sure, and so is Luna. But don't you think they earned that pride?"

Andrew snickered. "Maybe they did, but just not in front of me."

Chantelle gave a soft snort. "I can't argue with that stubborn mouth of yours. But let me remind you, the reason the Driscoll family has been holding back all this time is because Luna's been smoothing things out behind the scenes. Now that you two have openly fallen out, they won't be so polite anymore."

Andrew did not respond and walked over to a large tree nearby. As he looked at it, he let out a low whistle.

The thick tree now had a gaping hole right through it.

And the craziest part? A single leaf caused it.

Chantelle followed him. She leaned over to peek inside and let out a sharp breath. "Damn, she's a monster. A single leaf, and it punched clean through. That's what being a martial saint looks like, huh?"

Andrew yawned. "I mean... It's passable."

Chantelle gave him a skeptical look. "I know you're powerful, but I still want to ask. How strong are you at your peak, Andrew?"

He tilted his head and thought for a second, then grinned. "Let's just say... at my peak, I could make Luna call me Daddy with just one hand."

Chantelle burst out laughing. "Childish. Such a show-off."

The idea of Luna calling him Daddy? Not even if pigs flew.

Andrew gave her a strange look. "Ms. Garcia, have you noticed that you've been smiling a lot more lately?"

Chantelle was caught off guard. She brushed her hair behind her ear and huffed softly. "Have I? You must be imagining things."

Andrew said, "Smiling's not a bad thing. You're gorgeous, you know. And if you keep smiling like that, you'll see you're a full-on bombshell. Guys will be falling for you left and right."

Her cheeks flushed, and Chantelle tried to put on her usual icy front. But in front of Andrew, she knew that the aloofness was all just for show.

Annoyed, she snapped, "I don't need any man falling for me. I'm doing just fine on my own. And Andrew, stop saying such flirty nonsense to me!"

Andrew chuckled coldly. "We've already slept together. What's the point of pretending now? I know your highs and lows better than anyone, don't I?"

Chantelle was mortified and furious. "You pig! You're disgusting! Anyway, I'm here to talk business. Governor McCormick wants to see you. You've been making some waves lately, and he wants to give you a little warning."

Andrew grinned. "So this is you giving me a heads-up in advance?"

Chantelle turned her face away, acting all proud. "I didn't say anything, and you didn't hear anything. Got it?"

Andrew nodded, barely holding back his laughter. Derek probably had no idea that his trusted chief of staff had already changed sides.

Andrew changed into a fresh suit. Then, he followed Chantelle to the state office building.

"Mr. Lloyd is here!"

Derek was reviewing some files. When he saw Andrew walk in, he smiled warmly and greeted him without putting on airs.

Andrew smiled back. "Governor McCormick, sorry to drop in unannounced."

Derek laughed. "It's been a while

since we caught up, and now you're getting all polite on me? Elle, make us

Po cups of tea. I want to have a

proper chat with Mr. Lloyd

Chantelle responded, "On it!"

As she left, she threw Andrew a meaningful glance. He kept his polite smile, but

deep down, he understood that she was warning him.

Clearly, Derek was starting to look at him differently.

Derek began, "Mr. Lloyd, I've noticed

your businesses and your influence

have grown pretty fast. Your net worth is nearly 100 billion now. I also hear you've been meddling in the

feuds between the Wrights, the

Pecks, and even the Blumedale

underworld networks."

He continued, "They say you even helped take down Marcelo with one of your brilliant schemes."

He paused for a beat, his gaze sharpening as he looked straight at Andrew.

"Have you ever thought about easing up a bit?"

#### Chapter 1769

After a moment of silence, Andrew smiled calmly. "Governor McCormick, let's not beat around the bush. I think what you just said was a reminder that I've been expanding too quickly, which has made you uneasy, right?"

Derek looked surprised, then let out a short laugh. "You sure don't beat around the bush. Here I was, trying to be subtle. You're right, Mr. Lloyd. I am indeed uneasy."

He explained, "Gabo Creek province already has enough troublemakers. The Three Titans alone constantly exhaust me, and now there's you added to the mix. If we switched places and you were sitting in my position, how would you feel?"

Andrew nodded. "I get where you're coming from. When someone below keeps expanding unchecked, the result is always the same: things spiral out

of control. You're the head of this state, so naturally, that's the last thing you want. But I'll say this-you can trust me."

Derek raised an eyebrow and asked, "Can you give me just one reason to trust you?"

Andrew looked him in the eye and laughed.

Andrew met his gaze and smiled. "For the greater good of everyone!"

Derek shook his head. "Not good enough. Not even close."

Andrew said, "Then how about this? To fix the system, empower the marginalized, save forgotten knowledge, and build a better future."

Derek shook his head again. "You sound like you're running for President. So no, still not convincing."

Andrew paused for a moment, then slowly said, "Governor McCormick, do you remember something you once told me? You said you studied abroad at Chetvine. While you were there, you met someone brilliant in every way, someone who left a lasting impression and earned your respect."

Derek frowned slightly. "Yeah... I remember. It's true. To this day, that man sticks in my memory, but I never got to find out who he really was."

Andrew asked, "After becoming governor, did you ever use your connections or resources to try to find out?"

Derek hesitated, then let out a bitter laugh. "I'd be lying if I said no. Yeah, I did some digging. All I learned was that he came from the royal family of Chetvine. As for which exact family... that was beyond my reach."

Andrew said solemnly, "Well, you might not know, but I do. His name was Reginald, and he was from the Lloyds royal bloodline."

Derek's jaw dropped as shock filled his eyes.

Andrew continued, "That's not all I came to tell you. Reginald had a son, and his name is Andrew. Both of them are direct heirs of the Lloyds royal family, and their lifelong mission has always been to serve this great nation and this land. So, Governor McCormick, do you feel reassured now?"

Trying to suppress the storm of emotions brewing inside him, Derek's arm trembled as he clenched his fist tightly.

"Say no more. I get it. From now on, I won't question your moves. You have my complete trust."

He looked Andrew straight in the eye, dead serious.

The man standing before him was a descendant of the Lloyds royal family, and that changed everything.

The Lloyds had always been known for their unwavering loyalty and sacrifice. For the past hundred years, everyone knew it. Hence, there was no need to say more.

Andrew smiled. "Relax. No need to be so tense. In Gabo Creek, you're the boss. I'm just a minor character behind you."

Derek quickly waved him off. "No, no! Who am I to consider you smaller than me? Oh, Mr. Lloval neo

There's something I've always been curious about. Mind if I ask?"

Andrew nodded. "Go ahead."

Derek looked sheepish and

scratched his head. "So, rumor has it that every direct heir of the Lloyds family is born with a dragon mark. They say it marks the bloodline hierarchy within the family. So, what kind of dragon tattoo do you have?"

Without hesitation, Andrew pulled off his shirt. "Here. Take. Look all you want—"

"Hey, hey, just look! What's with the hands? Governor McCormick, please watch yourself! Hands off, will you?"

## Chapter 1770

Just then, Chantelle walked in carrying the tea, only to freeze on the spot. Her eyes widened as she blurted out, "Holy crap!"

Derek was practically draped over Andrew, his hands all over the place. Meanwhile, Andrew's shirt had been pulled open at the chest, and he kept dodging Derek's hands.

"Governor McCormick... W-w-what are you two doing?!" stared, completely stunned.

Derek scrambled upright and cleared his throat, his face slightly flushed. "Elle, it's not what it looks like!"

Then, he laughed awkwardly. "Come on, Mr. Lloyd, let's have some tea!"

His hands were shaking so badly that half the tea spilled.

Derek was still shocked that Andrew bore the legendary Blood-Eyed Black Dragon mark on his chest. Even for someone like him, who had seen all sorts of powerful figures, he still felt waves of excitement coursing through him.

The Blood-Eyed Black Dragon marking was the unique symbol that marked someone as a true heir of the Lloyds bloodline-one of the Dragon Princes.

Hence, Andrew's background was simply unfathomable.

Andrew casually pulled his shirt back on and said bluntly, "Ms. Garcia, just for the record, Governor McCormick was the one who got handsy. I behaved myself."

Chantelle glared at him. She could not believe Andrew was so merciless toward Derek.

She had only been out of the room for a few minutes, and these two men had somehow started a full-blown shirtless situation.

She was starting to believe that wherever Andrew showed up, chaos was guaranteed.

Derek shifted to serious business, his expression becoming grave. "Mr. Lloyd, there's actually another matter I wanted to discuss with you today. The southern martial arts world has been rather unsettled lately. The internal conflicts between several major organizations and martial arts families have started harming innocent people.

"Blumedale Hospital has received several victims who were caught in the crossfire, and I'm afraid we need you to take a look at them."

Andrew asked, "Aren't Dr. Goddard and Dr. Bozzeli still stationed there?"

Derek shook his head. "They're treating some of the wounded, but a few cases are beyond them. They're specifically waiting for you."

Andrew nodded. "Alright, I'll head over. But Governor McCormick, these martial arts clans bringing their grudges into the streets and dragging in innocent people? That's crossing a line.

"Even in ancient times, rogue fighters got punished for breaking the law. This is modern society, they're still pulling this kind of crap? I think you're going to have to get tough with them."

Derek let out a cold huff. "You're right, Mr. Lloyd. It's time to crack down on them. Gabo Creek has them three major alliances-Hidden Dragons, Crimson Alliance, and the

Onyx Serpents. In recent years,  
they've all started getting bold again.

"These muscleheads always think their fists are the law. Well, I've already made arrangements. Higher-ups have also dispatched experts from special departments to handle this!"

Andrew smiled. "Special  
departments? Let me guess-either  
they're from the Special Ops or  
Chetvine's Ironhold Division. Or  
perhaps they're specialized  
operatives sent by those  
over  
high-ranking elite families from Chetvine."

Derek looked shocked and exchanged glances with Chantelle. Finally, he smiled with complete admiration. "Mr. Lloyd, you got it exactly right! I never expected you to know these special departments so thoroughly!"

Andrew shrugged. "I wouldn't say I know them thoroughly, it's just that I've paid a few of them a visit before. The people from these  
organizations do have some skills, though, so they can't be completely written off as cannon fodder."

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Derek was speechless.

To Andrew, elite government agents were only slightly better than cannon fodder. Then again, he got it.

Andrew was a Dragon Prince of the Lloyds royal line, and he had the authority to talk that big.

Once they were done, Andrew and Chantelle headed out together, driving toward Blumedale Hospital.

"Mr. Lloyd, were you really that impressive back in Chetvine?" Chantelle asked. Andrew grinned. "Why? Starting to admire me now?"

She snorted and clenched her jaw. "Admire you? Please, don't make me throw up."