

RISING FROM THE ASHES (ANDREW AND LAUREN)

Chapter 1771

As soon as they arrived at Blumedale Hospital and stepped out of the car, Malcolm, Thomas, and Francesca were already there to greet them.

"Oh my, if it isn't Mr. Lloyd! What a rare guest! It's been ages since you last visited us here!" Malcolm laughed warmly, practically beaming.

Andrew waved his hand. "Come on, no need for all this fuss. I'm not some VIP, you and Dr. Bozzelli didn't need to come out personally."

Malcolm's expression turned serious. "Today is different from the past, Mr. Lloyd. It's only right that we come to welcome you."

Francesca stood beside them, trying to suppress a grin. She thought, 'Damn, look at my man! Walking into my workplace like he owns the place.'

Usually, she would roll her eyes, but still, this kind of attention gave her vanity a little thrill.

Only Thomas looked conflicted. He kept glancing at Andrew, wanting to say something. Eventually, he only managed a stiff, awkward welcome.

They said a lot could happen in a short time, and that was definitely true. Andrew had risen so fast in rank and influence that it was hard not to feel overshadowed just by standing near him.

Thomas certainly did. If he felt this way, one could only imagine how his student Jared felt.

Jared had once competed with Andrew for Francesca's affections out of jealousy. Upon learning that Andrew was coming to Blumedale Hospital, he did not even dare show his face.

Naturally, Andrew was uninterested in others' opinions. He said, "Let's not waste time then. Please lead the way so we can see the patients!"

Malcolm gestured. "This way, Mr. Lloyd! I won't follow along; Thomas and Fran will take you there!"

Andrew nodded with a smile. "Of course, Dr. Goddard. I'll let you get back to work."

As Thomas led the way, he suddenly said, "Mr. Lloyd, there's something I've been meaning to say for a long time. About the past... I owe you an apology."

Andrew blinked, then laughed. "Dr. Bozzelli, there's no need for that! Honestly, I didn't take it to heart. The past is the past, and there's no need to dwell on it."

Thomas let out a long breath and gave a sheepish smile. "You've achieved so much at such a young age, and I was blind back then. But I do need to give you a heads-up. You need to be extremely cautious today. The patients we received at Blumedale have pretty alarming symptoms. If you're not careful, you could risk exposure or poisoning."

Andrew nodded, though he did not seem overly concerned. Of all the things he feared, poisoning definitely was not on the list.

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More than a dozen patients lay on beds in the heavily sealed emergency room, where armed guards stood watch at the entrance.

Chantelle stopped outside. "I'll wait here, Mr. Lloyd. I won't go in."

Andrew nodded. "Good call. Since there's a chance of infection, it's better if you stay out here."

Andrew put on a mask and walked into the emergency room. Meanwhile, Francesca followed beside him, and Thomas entered behind them.

The air was chilled and misty, deliberately cold to slow down viral spread.

A man in a navy suit stood at one of

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hard and cold as he

f wearing a l

examined a patient's. His

a patient's wounds.

As Andrew walked in, the man turned and snapped, "Unless you have a death wish, turn around and leave now."

Andrew glanced at the tag pinned to the man's chest, which read "Special Ops".

He raised an eyebrow, not expecting Chetvine's Special Ops to arrive so fast.

Thomas quickly stepped forward with a polite smile. "Sir, please don't take it the wrong way! This is Dr. Andrew Lloyd, the Grand Physician

abo Creek."

The man did not reply. He just kept examining the patient, but the smirk that tugged at the corner of his

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uth made his contempt crystal clear.

Francesca frowned. "Andrew, let's just focus on treating the patients."

Andrew nodded, still smiling. "Yeah, I'll take a look first."

The man scoffed. "If any of you survive after touching the patient, you'll answer to

me, Hank Armstrong."

Chapter 1772

Hank's constant mockery was really starting to get on Francesca's nerves. Nonetheless, she still held back and did her best to explain.

"Chief Armstrong, we've already explained this. This is the Grand Physician of Gabo Creek. He's here for the same reason you are, which is to help these patients."

Malcolm had warned her that Hank came from a higher-level special unit. Hence, she should not offend him. Still, she could not stand that smug, condescending attitude. It was like everyone else in the room was beneath him.

Hank casually adjusted his white gloves, taking his time as he shook his head. He said, "I was trying to be nice and save your lives. A so-called 'Grand Physician' who doesn't know his limits, meddling with things way beyond his capabilities? Tell me, is that not a death wish?"

"I've said my piece. So, whether you listen or not, I won't say anything more!" With that, he glanced at Andrew and actually laughed out loud with contempt. Francesca's face changed, and she was about to explode.

However, Andrew smiled and said, "Fran, let's focus on treating the patients first. As for that guy over there, just treat him like a barking dog!"

Hank's eyebrows twitched, and his gaze became sharp. "What did you say? Who did you say was barking like a dog?"

Andrew ignored him and began examining the first patient's condition. Without looking up, he replied, "If the shoe fits, that's who I'm talking about!"

Hank's eyes turned vicious, and he instinctively reached for the folding knife at his waist. As a Special Ops agent, he traveled all over Holtrien, and everyone treated him with the utmost respect.

Yet, this punk was completely fearless and clueless!

The next second, Hank's eyes widened in shock. He watched in disbelief as Andrew touched the patient with his bare hands, not even wearing gloves, and made direct contact.

Not only was he touching the patient, but he also pulled out golden needles and began treatment immediately.

Hank scoffed. "You're dead. In just three seconds, your skin is going to rot and ooze, and your nervous system will collapse. Even God can't help you now."

He gave his grim prediction like a final judgment.

Andrew calmly replied, "This is what Special Ops sends these days? Seriously? I'm starting to think you're not an agent but a pig in disguise."

Hank exploded with rage. He started counting aloud, "Three, two, one! Drop!"

Meanwhile, Andrew calmly stepped to the second patient and continued treatment.

Hank's brows furrowed, and he wondered how Andrew was unharmed. He watched in stunned disbelief as Andrew finished treating the second patient, then moved to the third, fourth, and fifth patients.

Hank was completely dumbfounded, staring in shock. "These people have been infected by parasite poison. Their bodies are hosting venomous

parasites. Even touching their skin should've spread the eggs, causing internal bleeding, paralysis...

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Staring at Andrew like he was some kind of alien, he stammered, "H-How is it possible that you're fine?"

Andrew ignored him completely and finished treating all of the patients in one go. Then, he pulled out a pen and scribbled a prescription on a slip of paper, handing it to Francesca.

"Follow this prescription and immediately prepare the medicine for these people to consume. Make sure they drink plenty and keep them hydrated until their urine and blood tests are clean. That's the sign they're out of danger."

Francesca lit up with joy. "Honey, you're incredible!"

Thomas looked on with genuine admiration. "Dr. Lloyd, your skills are extraordinary. When it comes to medicine, we've got so much to learn from you."

Andrew chuckled. "You flatter me."

Thomas laughed. "Come on, let's go find Dr. Goddard. Looks like we're done here."

The two of them walked off, chatting casually as they left Hank standing there awkwardly in silence.

"Dr. Bozzelli, I also need to see Dr. Goddard. The parasite poison incident involves much more than you think. Without Special Ops, your little Blumedale Hospital won't be able to handle this," Hank said.

His voice was tight with suppressed anger, his face dark.

Thomas was surprised. "Dr. Lloyd has already neutralized these patients' parasite poison! It seems we won't need your services after all!"

Hank snorted and replied arrogantly, "Neutralizing the parasite poison in these people is just the first small step! What's left is tracking down who administered the poison and where the source is located."

He added, "This will likely involve martial arts organizations and masters from the underworld. Do you think this punk beside you can handle those kinds of challenges?"

"Do you think Special Ops agents get involved for nothing? Wherever we show

up, it means the situation has already gone way beyond what you people can deal

with."

Chapter 1773

Hank said, "Alright, lead the way. I don't want to waste words on anything else. Frankly, none of you are qualified to know the rest."

After that, he walked ahead with extreme arrogance.

As he passed by Andrew, he shot him a cold glance. The look was meant to tell Andrew that he would be watching him now.

Andrew remained completely calm. After all, Hank was just a rookie who came out of Special Ops. If it were not for the fact that Hank's superiors might still have some connection with him, Andrew would not mind finding a secluded place to beat him senseless.

Later, the three arrived at Malcolm's office one after another.

Chantelle was already seated and stood up as they entered. "Mr. Lloyd, how did it go?"

Andrew smiled. "Why don't you ask Dr. Bozzelli?"

Thomas immediately answered, "All the patients are fully cleared of the parasite poison! Dr. Lloyd's medical skill is nothing short of miraculous."

Chantelle gave a warm, proud smile. Then, she looked at Andrew with clear admiration in her eyes.

Malcolm said gratefully, "Dr. Lloyd, thank you so much!"

Andrew waved his hand dismissively. "It was nothing. But this parasite poison is usually quite rare. Generally speaking, only the Patoajan regions of our country have this kind of vicious stuff. Gabo Creek Province is in our country's Gabo Creek wetlands region, very far from their territories. So, having locals get poisoned here is worth serious attention!"

Malcolm nodded. "That's exactly what I was thinking! But Governor McCormick made it clear that we only handle the medical side, and everything else is none of our business!"

Hank spoke up at this point, his tone very aggressive. "Of course, your local hospital doesn't need to handle it. It's because you couldn't handle it anyway! Once those patients are stable, I'll interrogate each one thoroughly!"

Malcolm and the others nodded cooperatively, but they all found this Special Ops officer quite irritating. These higher-level special departments were so arrogant and self-important that they made everyone uncomfortable.

However, Hank was completely oblivious to how obnoxious his show-off attitude was. His eyes swept the room and landed on Chantelle, and they immediately lit up with interest.

"You must be Ms. Chantelle Garcia, Governor McCormick's secretary, right? I'm Special Ops Agent Hank Armstrong, code name 1414. I'll need your full cooperation for the upcoming work!"

He stepped forward, reaching out eagerly for a handshake.

Chantelle frowned slightly before reluctantly shaking his hand. "Nice to meet you."

Hank smiled. "From what I can see, these poisoned patients won't be ready for questioning until tomorrow. So, I'm free for the night. Ms. Garcia, how about dinner tonight? We can discuss work."

Chantelle looked visibly uncomfortable, but she kept her smile polite. "That won't be necessary. I've already got plans tonight."

Yet, Hank did not give up. He pressed on, still grinning. "Ah, I see! Work-related, I assume? If that's the case, I could speak to Governor McCormick and have him give you the evening off."

He said it with smug superiority, showing off his influence. It was as if getting Derek to cut her loose for a dinner date was no big deal for a Special Ops agent.

Chantelle was getting annoyed and replied directly, "I'm not busy with official duties tonight! I'm checking into a hotel with Mr. Lloyd, so that's that. Goodbye!" With that, she grabbed Andrew's arm and walked straight out.

Everyone in the room was somewhat dumbfounded. Malcolm and Thomas had not expected that Andrew had already "conquered" the highest levels of government.

This was a skill level even seasoned men like them could only envy. After all, the person he had won over was none other than Derek's chief of staff.

Chantelle had always been known in Blumedale for being difficult and cold. Even so, she was undeniably a prize catch. She was even more desirable than the daughters of the Five Apex Families because she represented the government and had Derek's backing.

To put it bluntly, winning over this ice queen was equivalent to gaining half of Derek's political stronghold.

Meanwhile, Hank stood frozen like a statue. He could not believe that he had just been rejected.

He was a Special Ops agent, a

tactical specialist with top-level clearance. Yet, he was openly turned down and informed that she was actually checking into a hotel with the punk he could not stand.

Instantly, Hank's eyes revealed a flash of murderous intent. He thought, So this Andrew guy gets all the luck, huh? Fine. I'll teach him a lesson and show him what it means to be a Special Ops agent.

Chapter 1774

Everyone else was stunned, and honestly, so was Andrew.

As Chantelle dragged him along, he gave her a wry smile. "What's this? You mad

or something? Announcing our relationship in front of everyone like that? That's not really your style."

Chantelle scoffed. "Hank's stare made my skin crawl."

Andrew blinked. "So, you used me as a shield?"

Chantelle gritted her teeth. "I wasn't using you as a shield. I meant it. I want to stay over at your place tonight."

Andrew frowned. "Didn't we just do it last night? You're kind of on a streak lately."

Chantelle nearly choked on her own breath. Her face flushed red with fury and embarrassment. "Andrew, are you even a man? How could you say that? Fine! Let's say I am insatiable. Just answer me straight-are you in or not?"

Andrew did not hesitate for even a second. "I'm definitely in."

If he even paused for a moment on an offer like that, he deserved to get struck by lightning.

Chantelle said, "I'm leaving now. By the way, don't ever ask me something like that again."

She was clearly pissed, yanking the car door open and sliding into the driver's seat. Through the window, she shot him a sharp, cold look. "I like men who take charge. Someone bold and aggressive. So, don't be afraid to push me around a little. I like it when a guy doesn't ask permission."

With that, she slammed the pedal, peeling out fast.

Andrew stood there, fighting a laugh. He was sure that Chantelle was the second coming of Aspen, both strong on the outside and submissive underneath.

They both liked it when he took control.

Women were total mysteries, and judging a book by its cover was not wise.

Andrew gave Aspen a quick call and asked her to come pick him up. Half an hour later, he was sitting in the passenger seat of her Ferrari, on the way to a new entertainment company.

Pioneer Entertainment was the name of the new place.

"Freya! Look who I brought!" Aspen called out with a bright grin as they stepped into the lobby.

Freya came jogging out excitedly. "Andrew! You made it!"

"So, what do you think? Pretty impressive setup, right?"

Andrew had already taken a quick look around earlier and gave her a nod.

"Not bad at all. You've already launched, I assume?"

Freya raised her chin smugly. "Of course. Not only launched, but we're already making money. Come on! It show you around! We've got livestreamers, short-form content creators, and I even built a mini web series production unit."

Andrew raised an eyebrow. "All of that sounds pricey to set up. Where'd the funding come from?"

Freya gave a guilty chuckle. "Well... It's all your money. Ms. Stevens gave me a one billion investment."

Andrew turned toward Aspen, who

quickly held up her hands. "Mr. Lloyd, I promise I wasn't throwing your money around. I really believe in Ms Keller's entertainment

company; it's got serious potential. Streaming and e-commerce are booming right now, and short-form content is too. We shouldn't miss this wave."

Andrew nodded slowly. "Alright. If you think it's worth backing, I won't question it."

Freya pouted a little. "See? That's what I've noticed. You trust Aspen without hesitation. But me? You're always cautious. You won't even invest properly."

Andrew almost laughed out loud. He really wanted to tell her that Aspen had been sharing body and soul with him for months. Hence, he knew everything about her.

Freya? She did not come close.

Just then, Hannah strutted into the company. She was decked out in designer labels, carrying a handbag worth hundreds of thousands, and full makeup.

"Freya, I'm here! Wait-Andrew? You're here too?"

Hannah squealed and waved enthusiastically, clearly putting on a show the moment she saw him.