

Rising from the Ashes (Andrew and Lauren)

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Andrew was livid.

That night, no one at Serenity Villa slept. In fact, many of the top figures from the Gabo Creek Chamber of Commerce rushed over immediately.

Lauren had already arranged for them to wait in the guest lounge on the villa's lower level. One by one, they sat stiffly, as if on pins and needles.

An attempt on Andrew's life? To them, that was like the sky falling.

Someone from the chamber spoke up hesitantly, "Mr. Irving Senior, Madam Gardner, you're both close to Mr. Lloyd. Maybe you should go upstairs and ask what's going on?"

Duncan's face was grim as he responded firmly, "My suggestion is that at this critical moment, it's best not to go looking for trouble! Mr. Lloyd is currently angry, and whoever goes to run their mouth will definitely regret it!"

Rachel's face was pale, her voice bitter with anger. "I agree. Whoever did this needs to be found fast. Attacking Mr. Lloyd is a declaration of war."

Andrew suddenly entered with an ice-cold

All 30-plus chamber members stood at once, their faces tense.

Andrew said calmly, "Sit. It's not that big a deal."

No one dared sit because Andrew had not yet sat down. Only after he took the main seat did the others slowly lower themselves into their chairs.

"Mr. Lloyd, my people are already mobilized. We'll have the surveillance footage from that area soon!" Duncan spoke first, eager to show his support.

Rachel immediately followed up, "Mr. Lloyd, I'm also investigating everyone who passed through that area within five hours of when you parked!"

Andrew waved his hand dismissively. "No need. These matters are the government's responsibility, so let them handle it. But stay seated. There are a few more friends I'm waiting on."

Duncan and the others looked at each other in confusion, wondering who Andrew was waiting for.

Nonetheless, they did not have to wait long. Soon, two figures in long black robes entered one after the other. When they pulled back their hats, the room collectively stiffened.

"Andy, only you could drag me out at this ungodly hour, and only for you would I bother!"

"Let's skip the small talk and just tell us what you want. But just so we're clear, my help doesn't come cheap."

A wave of unease swept through the room. After all, the two guests were not just anyone.

They were Ronald and Aaron, the Black and White Dragon Kings-the two most notorious power players in Blumedale's underworld.

Andrew gestured to the seats beside him. "Sit. We'll talk things through properly."

Ronald sat on the left, while Aaron took the right.

The two were mortal enemies, and if not for Andrew as the mediator, they would never have appeared in the same place under normal circumstances.

"I've asked you both here to

investigate the attack on me today. You have many people and

extensive networks. Besides, I know how deep the underworld's bag of tricks runs."

He looked them both in the eye and added, "Find out who's behind this, and name your price."

Aaron gave a subtle smile and said nothing, clearly planning to gauge the market first.

However, Ronald shook his head. "Andy, I can help you with almost anything, but

not this. I'm sorry. I can't get involved in this one."

Andrew nodded slightly, his face unreadable.

Ronald frowned, unsure what Andrew was really thinking.

Aaron let out a sharp laugh. "Ronald,

you're such a coward. If you won't touch this, then I will. Mr. Lloyd, I

know you're not short on cash, and your life is worth more than gold. So, let's cut to it. We've worked together before, so I'll give you a flat rate of 100 million. You pay, and I'll find your attacker."

Andrew shook his head. "Too much."

Aaron scoffed. "That's a friendly price. If it were anyone else, they'd be paying 50 billion minimum."

Duncan and Rachel both looked like they were about to explode. They silently cursed at how Aaron was trying to bleed them dry with the price.

Rachel clenched her jaw and looked It was obvious that she

at Amake a major

was willing

sacrifice, offering one-tenth of her billion-dollar fortune.

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Andrew shut Rachel down without hesitation. "Keep your money. I'm not desperate enough to let you pay for this!"

Rachel insisted. "For you, I'm willing to spend that much!"

Andrew's expression darkened. "I said don't spend the money, so don't spend it. It's just finding the real culprit behind this. You really think it's worth 100 million?"

Aaron was not pleased when he heard this and scoffed. "Mr. Lloyd, since you think 100 million is too expensive, just forget what I said! I hope you think it through clearly because someone's still got their sights set on your life!

"Don't you want to find out who it is and eliminate this threat once and for all?" Andrew grinned. "Of course I do, so I still need Ronald to give me some advice!" Ronald's eyelid twitched as he said stiffly, "I don't know what you mean. I can't advise if I don't even know who the real culprit is."

Andrew's smile grew wider. "Are you sure you don't?"

Ronald's face turned ugly. "I don't. And if I did, why would I hide it? Andy, you're overthinking this, and honestly, you're giving me too much credit. Whoever's behind this clearly isn't some average thug. I'm not a damn psychic, and I can't know everything."

Andrew let out a cold chuckle. "Cut the act, will you? If you didn't know, your reaction just now wouldn't have given you away. Remember what you said earlier? That you can't get involved? What exactly are you not getting involved in?"

"Sounds like whoever's behind this is someone you either can't afford to cross or don't want to betray. Or maybe... It's you. Maybe that's why you've been talking in circles and playing with smoke and mirrors."

Ronald's expression turned downright ugly because Andrew's sharp deduction had hit a nerve. Despite how careful he had been, Andrew still managed to sniff him out.

The others began catching on, too, and they all turned toward Ronald, eyes narrowing.

"Mr. Potter, do us all a favor. If you know who's behind this, just say it," Duncan said with a snort.

Rachel's face was stone cold. "Mr. Potter, the one who got attacked is our Chairman. If you stay silent, everyone in the Gabo Creek Chamber of Commerce will remember this."

Aaron chuckled. "So you do know what's going on, huh, Ronald? Let me guess, you weren't the one who made the move. Otherwise, you wouldn't have had the guts to show up here today. So, that only means someone else is pulling the strings. And that someone scares the hell out of you."

He continued, "Because if it were up to your greed and ambition, you would've jumped at the chance to bleed Andrew dry by now."

With everyone staring at him, Ronald slowly shut his eyes. When he opened them again, there was a deadly chill in his gaze.

"I do know who did it, but sorry. I'm not naming names. Andrew, you're in real deep this time. If you want answers, ask someone else. I'm not getting dragged into this mess."

He stood up, yanked his hat down low to cover his face, and turned to leave.

However, Duncan stepped sideways, blocking his path. "Mr. Potter, tell us who did it. Otherwise, you're not going anywhere."

Ronald laughed. It was low at first, then rose to a manic pitch. "Duncan, you pathetic roach... You really think you can block my way? Get lost, or tomorrow, you'll wake up to find your whole damn Irving family wiped out."

Duncan's face went pale. He was furious, but did not dare talk back.

With his status, or Rachel's and the others', Ronald did not consider them worth his attention.

Just then, a crisp clicking sound rang out.

Everyone turned toward it, only to see a sleek black pistol pressed right to Ronald's forehead.

"Say it, or I'll personally send you to meet Marcelo."

Andrew's voice was light, almost cheerful, but no one found it pleasant to hear.

They were all frozen in shock. Even Aaron would not have dared to threaten Ronald like this.

Yet, Andrew had gone straight for Ronald's throat.

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"Andy, what the hell are you doing?" Ronald's voice cracked with fury as he felt the cold, hard muzzle of the gun press against his forehead.

Andrew smiled like it was no big deal. "What am I doing? Are your eyes failing you? I'm about to find out exactly who made the move."

Ronald roared, completely losing it. "Andrew, you're really pulling this stunt? What

if I just don't tell you? You seriously think you'll pull the damn trigger?"

Andrew calmly released the safety. "You can test me if you want."

Beads of cold sweat rolled down Ronald's forehead. He could not tell from Andrew's gaze whether the man would actually shoot. Nonetheless, even with his formidable strength, his brains would still be blown out.

"Fine! I'll talk! Damn it, I'll talk! But Andrew, I won't ever forget this humiliation!"

Andrew simply smiled, holding the gun tightly.

Ronald spat, "The one who planted the explosives is hiding in Gutter's Maw right now. You don't need me to spell out the exact spot because your people will find it fast enough. As for the mastermind... I can't say. But knowing you, you'll find a way to make them talk."

He finished in one breath. Then, he let out a cold snort and stormed off.

Andrew placed the gun back on the table and said flatly, "Meeting's over. The rest of this doesn't concern any of you."

Aaron smirked. "Gutter's Maw ain't exactly the easiest place to catch someone. Mr. Lloyd, how about I handle it for you... Say, for 100 million?"

Andrew pointed at the door. "Have a nice day."

Aaron's smile twitched, and he slinked off in defeat. He had hoped to make a huge profit out of this, but who would have thought that Andrew was such a damn tightwad who would not part with a penny?

Duncan said, "Mr. Lloyd, I'll take my men to Gutter's Maw and handle the arrest!"

Andrew's expression was cold. "I'm coming with you."

He went upstairs to check in with

Lauren and the others to give them a quick update. After that, he brought Dylan and Natasha along, and he joined Duncan's team heading toward Gutter's Maw.

Blumedale's Gutter's Maw was notorious for being dirty, chaotic and dangerous. Law enforcement officers were in and out all the time, dealing with every kind of crime you could think of.

Suddenly, a wooden shack by a reeking drainage canal was kicked open. Then, about four trained men burst inside. However, the moment they stepped in, they were knocked out and sent flying back out through the doorway.

At the back of the shack, a dark figure smashed through the wall and bolted. Within seconds, he vanished beneath the dim glow of the streetlights.

Duncan lost it. "Useless morons! Get after him now! If you don't catch him, you can all drop dead for all I care!"

He turned to Andrew, looking embarrassed. "Mr. Lloyd, I'm sorry about that. But don't worry, I'll get that bastard."

Andrew waved a hand.

"Call them off. Natasha, Dylan-go."

The two of them were already on the move, vanishing down the narrow alley in pursuit.

Andrew did not say a word as he turned down another alley, picking up speed with every step.

Duncan and the others following behind him were completely puzzled.

"Mr. Lloyd, what are you doing?" Rachel jogged along, looking confused. Andrew said calmly, "That guy's pretty skilled, and the terrain here is very complex. If we just chase him straight-on, we might never catch up."

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Andrew explained, "So we can try cutting him off from whichever direction he's most likely to escape."

Duncan and the others looked completely lost. After all, this was way beyond their area of expertise.

Nevertheless, watching Andrew weaving in and out of different alleyways without hesitation, they gave up trying to make sense of it and simply followed.

Suddenly, Andrew stopped. To his left was a narrow alley, pitch black from end to end. The concrete buildings on either side stood a few stories tall, casting the path into complete darkness.

Rachel peeked in and said, "It looks like a dead end. There aren't even any lights in there."

Andrew did not respond. Instead, he told everyone to step back and clear the path.

They did not have to wait long before a figure suddenly burst out of the dark alley, sprinting like hell, moving at full speed.

Andrew struck in an instant. His arm snapped out like a steel clamp, catching the runner right at the throat.

The man, Gilbert Brock, was lean, but the power behind his sprint was explosive. He could have rammed a bull straight off its feet at that speed. Yet, Andrew's single hand caught him right at the neck just in time and with perfect control.

Gilbert let out a furious roar and tried to fight back. However, Andrew lifted and slammed down.

Gilbert's feet slipped, and just as he felt his body lift off the ground, everything flipped. With a heavy crash, he hit the pavement hard, letting out a blood-curdling scream as blood streamed from his nose and mouth.

Duncan and his men were frozen in shock, their hearts pounding wildly.

Andrew had unleashed that kind of strength without even breaking a sweat.

Duncan's eyelids twitched, and he could not help thinking back to when Andrew had put him in his place. He secretly felt relieved that he had not completely offended Andrew.

Natasha and Dylan soon caught up.

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Seeing Gilbert on the ground, neither of them looked surprised. Since Andrew had personally come along, there was no way this guy could escape.

"Take him," Andrew ordered. He turned and walked straight out of Gutter's Maw.

Ten minutes later, he was sitting in the private room of Zachary's bar.

Zachary knew better than to ask questions and gave Andrew the needed space.

After shutting the door, Andrew turned to the bloodied man in front of him.
"You're the one who planted the bomb in my car, right?"

Gilbert spat blood to the side,
sneered, and replied without a caret
in
the

world. "Yeah, I did it. So what
I are you gonna do about it?"

Dylan's eyes turned cold. "You bastard, let me rip off one of your arms first
and see if you're still so tough!"

Gilbert sneered again. "Be my guest. I won't even grunt."

Andrew raised a hand and smiled. "He's got guts. Show a little respect and
don't touch him."

Gilbert let out a twisted laugh. "You've got some sense, but I'd advise you to
let me go. Otherwise, you won't live past three days."

Andrew said, "Oh? Won't live past three days? Sounds like you're pretty
confident with the boss behind you."

Gilbert scoffed. "I'm telling you, even
three days is being generous. You
have no clue what kind of force
you've stirred up. That person could

just stomp their foot and the whole Blumedale would be turned upside down!"

Andrew nodded slowly. "Yeah, sounds real impressive. Scary, even. It almost
makes me nervous."

Gilbert grinned, ready to keep bragging. Suddenly, two heavy slaps landed directly on his face, and he spurted out a mouthful of blood again.

He looked absolutely incredulous and shouted, "You still dare to hit me?"

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Andrew followed up the slaps by yanking Gilbert's hair with brute force.

Gilbert let out a pained howl, like his scalp was about to be ripped clean off.

Andrew growled, "You idiot. If I had the balls to hunt you down, do you really think I'd be scared of the coward hiding behind you? This is your last chance. Tell me who ordered you to do it."

His voice dropped into a bone-chilling cold.

Gilbert's head was forced back, his face twisted in pain. He snarled, "You can beat me to death and I still won't talk. Andrew, you're dead. The person behind me will rip you apart."

Before he could even finish his threat, he let out a piercing scream.

Dylan and Natasha felt their scalps tingle when they saw Andrew begin his interrogation.

Two gold needles had been driven deep into Gilbert's fingers, straight through the nerve endings. Fingers were one of the body's most sensitive parts, and those thin needles went all the way in.

Even imagining it gave them goosebumps.

Gilbert panted violently, letting out broken screams. "You'll never get a word from me-"

Then, he howled in pain before finally giving in. "Okay! I'll talk, I'll say everything! Please, no more! Please stop!"

However, Andrew already had two more needles ready and casually jabbed them into the next two fingers.

The effect was instant, and Gilbert begged for mercy instantly, trembling all over. Andrew chuckled. "Already breaking? And here I thought you were a tough guy."

Gilbert's eyes filled with terror. "You're a freaking devil! I'll talk, I'll tell you everything! Just don't touch me again!"

Andrew shook his head.

Gilbert flinched, panic flashing across his face. "W-What does that mean? You're not satisfied?"

Andrew smiled warmly. "Of course I'm not. Weren't you acting all tough just now? I love tough guys. Come on, keep screaming for me. When you're done, then maybe we can have a nice little chat."

So, the screams echoed again, filled with agony and despair. It went on for nearly three minutes before the room finally fell quiet again.

Dylan and Natasha were both secretly shaken. When Andrew got mad, he was truly a demon in human form.

Outside the private room, Zachary was smoking and leisurely drinking.

Ruth's scalp tingled as she asked nervously, "Zac, just how angry is Mr. Lloyd?"

Setting down his glass and blowing out a big puff of smoke, Zachary chuckled, "Angry? This is nothing! this guy really gets mad. It wouldn't be an exaggeration to say he could level all of Blumedale in Gabo Creek province, not just make people scream!"

Ruth's throat moved as she swallowed hard, not daring to ask any more questions.

Soon, the door opened, and Andrew walked out with his people.

Zachary approached and asked, "How did the questioning go?"

Andrew appeared calm as he said, "It was someone from the Driscoll family. You've heard of Scarlett Driscoll, right?"

Zachary frowned. "Scarlett's the

head woman of the Driscoll family. There are a lot of children in that family, but at the top, she's the one who runs the show. Joe might be the one everyone sees and talks about, but behind the scenes,

Scarlett's power and control rival the family patriarch."

Andrew gave a soft nod and turned to leave. Before walking off, he added casually, "Take care of the guy inside."

Zachary grinned. "Sure. Tonight, every stray dog in Blumedale's getting a five-star meal."

After Andrew left, Ruth finally dared to speak. "Zac, going up against the Driscoll family isn't exactly a good idea, is it? They're one of the Three Titans."

Zachary snorted. "Relax. The only ones in trouble are the Driscolls. Those so- called Three Titans? They have no idea what kind of monster they just provoked."