

RISING FROM THE ASHES (ANDREW AND LAUREN)

Chapter 1836

Someone said, "No matter what, this guy is just badass. Daring to go against the Yeagers and making both the father-son duo look like complete fools? That alone puts him above countless people here!"

Nonetheless, some people thought Andrew was being reckless and seeking death, while others felt Andrew's behavior showed real heroic spirit.

Alex approached and said coldly, "Zachary, you've advanced! Now come with me to see Mr. Thornton!"

Jerome, being a high-ranking figure, had already left midway through the trial. So, he was not present for the chaos that followed.

Zachary, still covered in blood and injuries, hesitated. "Mr. Wallace, may I change clothes and treat my wounds before meeting him?"

Alex snapped impatiently. "When I say go, you go! What, you think you're a big deal now just because you won?"

Zachary's expression darkened. It was obvious that Alex still would not let it go.

Andrew's voice turned ice-cold. "You senile jackass, are you brain-dead? Can't you see that Mr. Thornton's top recruit is standing here, covered in blood after claiming first place? Zachary just beat Joseph, and he's exactly the kind of disciple Jerome should be grooming!"

He hissed, "But you? You bitter old fart, you're already trying to suppress him out of jealousy. Do you want me to take this straight to Jerome and let him know what kind of crap you're pulling?"

His words showed no courtesy whatsoever as he unleashed a verbal assault on Alex.

Alex's beard trembled with rage. "You insolent brat, you..."

Andrew grinned, all venom. "Save it, fossil. You think you get to bully outsiders just because you're posted at Mr. Thornton's side? If I can slap Matthew around, what makes you think I'd flinch at you?"

Alex fell completely silent, his face a thundercloud. He had seen Andrew's earlier strike. Matthew was a martial king, yet Andrew had sent him flying with a single punch.

Alex still could not figure out just how deep Andrew's strength ran.

Alex gritted out. "Fine. You have 30 minutes. Clean up and be ready to meet Mr. Thornton for the official initiation."

With that, he turned and stormed off.

Andrew said calmly, "Let's go. First impressions matter, and you can't show up looking like roadkill."

Zachary smiled bitterly. "Captain, when you told me to strangle Joseph earlier, you weren't serious, were you?"

Andrew smirked. "What do you think?"

Zachary fell silent because when it came to Andrew's orders, they were never jokes.

Just thinking about it sent a chill

down his spine. He did not even want to imagine how Goldridge would have exploded if he had really killed Joseph in front of the entire hall. The Yeagers would have surely scoured the entire city to hunt them down.

Just as the two turned to leave, they bumped into two figures: Scarlett and Henry. Both were legendary-level powerhouses.

"There's a guy in Blumedale, Gabo Creek, making waves lately. Name's Andrew Lloyd," Henry said, his deep voice cutting through the air.

Dressed in black, tall and broad-shouldered, Henry sized Andrew up from head to toe.

Finally, he asked, "That's you, isn't it?"

Andrew glanced at him. "Yeah. Got a problem with that?"

Henry nodded, impressed. "Bold. Reminds me of myself back in the day. But more than that, you've got the strength to back it up. I'm Henry, also from Gabo Creek. My family's the Fischers, one of the Three Titans. If you ever run into trouble here in Goldridge, come find me."

He gave a slight wave, turned, and walked off with clean efficiency.

Andrew's expression took on a hint of confusion. He wondered if this was an olive branch being extended to him in an attempt to win him over?

Next came Scarlett. She said, "It's, always the person you least want to see who shows up! Andrew, I didn't expect our first official encounter to be here in Goldridge."

Her expression was sly, with a trace of amusement.

Andrew scowled. "Do you have something to say? If not, move aside. My mom

always told me that pretty women are the most dangerous."

Scarlett blinked, then blushed. Was this little punk flirting with her?

But the very next second, Andrew added, "And worse than pretty women are ugly

ones. Ms. Driscoll, unfortunately, you give me the vibe of the latter."

Scarlett froze where she stood, her expression turning ice cold.

That bastard really had a death wish.

Behind her stood a dozen top-tier fighters from the Driscoll family, and every one of them was stunned speechless.

It was the first time in their lives that they had heard someone dare to call Scarlett ugly.

Chapter 1837

After leaving the great hall, Andrew pulled Zachary toward the back exit.

Zachary looked puzzled and asked, "Captain, why are we going this way?"

Andrew said flatly, "We're not taking the front entrance. There's trouble there."

Zachary was startled. "You mean the Yeagers and Scarlett and those people?" Andrew's tone was somewhat helpless. "Those are fine. In the worst case, I'll just kill them if they get in my way. The real trouble is Rowan! That woman has her sights set on me, and I don't want to see her."

Zachary forgot about his injuries and grinned mischievously. "Captain, really? Have you and Rowan already hooked up?"

Andrew gave him a smack on the head. "Hooked up my ass! Doesn't your wound hurt? Why are you so damn nosy?"

Zachary just kept laughing. "Hey, I'm in a great mood! The wounds hurt, but I made it to the inner circle! Captain, let me say it again: you're as awesome as ever!"

Andrew waved him off, telling him to cut it out. The back exit also had guards, but they successfully slipped out onto the street after showing their

identification. Then, they hailed a cab to return to the hotel and meet with Lauren and the others.

At the headquarters' main entrance, people who had come to observe the inner disciple examination were continuously streaming out. Several pairs of cold eyes swept back and forth over the entering and exiting people, not missing any figure.

A black Mercedes stopped, and someone opened the car door. Scarlett, looking elegant and noble but with a cold expression, got in.

She scoffed silently. 'What an idiot for offending the local major families in Goldridge. I really don't know what this guy was thinking.'

She let out a mocking laugh once she sat down.

From the front seat, her trusted aide frowned. "Ms. Driscoll, that Andrew guy's luck is something else. Our people chased him relentlessly, and he still made it here in one piece!"

Scarlett answered flatly, "I didn't expect much from those useless hitmen anyway. Andrew's no average fighter. If I wanted him dead face-to-face, I'd have to do it myself. But looks like I won't need to lift a finger."

Her aide's expression shifted into a sly grin. "You mean... the Yeagers have him marked already?"

Scarlett snorted. "Those dozen pairs of eyes outside? All Yeager scouts. All because Andrew embarrassed Matthew in public for that disciple trial spot. If he doesn't get out of Goldridge fast, then what awaits him is death."

The aide clenched his fists with excitement. "Perfect. That bastard might finally get what's coming to him! If we weren't tied up with bigger things, I'd suggest we cripple him ourselves while he's exposed."

Scarlett replied coolly, "Drive. Focus on the real mission. Jerome's reign as the head of the Southern Martial Union is over. The Driscoll family will rise under my hand into the core of the Union."

Her expression gleamed with ambition, cold and sharp.

The luxury car drove off.

As it rolled down the road, Scarlett's gaze drifted out the window. Suddenly, she spotted a familiar figure standing on tiptoe, peeking inside the hall.

That figure seemed to be waiting for someone.

Scarlett muttered, "Rowan... is waiting for someone? She doesn't look like a guild president at all. If she were mine, I'd have whipped her into shape ages ago."

Back at the Union's grand hall, most of the crowd had already dispersed.

Rowan stood outside with her arms crossed, waiting for half an hour.

However, Andrew never appeared.

She huffed. "That bastard... Did he pull the same disappearing act like five years ago?"

Her expression turned stormy, her canines grinding together in frustration.

Evan, who had stuck close to her the whole time, finally could not help but ask, "Rowan, just who exactly are you waiting for?"

Rowan snapped, pacing in irritation. "Stop asking, okay? That damn guy's just as slippery as ever."

Then, she scoffed. "Goldridge isn't that big! I will find you!"

Evan could not help but whisper, "The one you're waiting for... it wouldn't happen

to be the guy who took on Mr. Yeager Senior, would it?"

Rowan looked cold and indifferent. "So what if it is, and so what if it isn't?"

Evan immediately felt uncomfortable, his voice rising with frustration. "So you do

know him?"

Rowan's cheeks turned a little red as she snapped back, "Evan, what are you trying to say?"

Evan clenched his jaw. "Nothing. I just want to remind you not to forget who you

are. Don't forget what we are to each other. You're focused on some random nobody, so what does that make me?"

Rowan's expression dimmed, her tone distant. "I don't want to talk about this pointless stuff. I'm tired. Let's head back to the hotel to rest."

Evan kept pace beside her and tried to explain, "Rowan, I wasn't trying to interrogate you. I just think that guy isn't worth your attention. He caused a huge

scene earlier, and now he's on the Yeagers' blacklist.

"With their influence in Goldridge, they will come after him. Plus, I've heard rumors

that Mr. Thornton was recently attacked and is seriously injured. Goldridge is full

of danger right now, and it's not safe. You're the president of the Onyx Serpents.

You should focus on our organization, not waste time on some irrelevant little punk!"

Rowan did not even look back as she replied, "He's not just some punk. He has a

name, Andrew Lloyd. Five years ago, I was seriously ill. You remember that, right?

It was he who saved my life and healed me. I just want to find him and thank him."

Evan scoffed. "If it's just gratitude, wait until I find his address. I'll send ten million

his way. You don't need to lower yourself like this, chasing after some nobody with

your status."

Rowan did not answer, but her eyes flickered as she quietly spun through ideas.

She was already thinking of ways to ditch Evan and track down Andrew herself.

This time, she would not let that pervert who had touched her all over five years

ago slip through her fingers again.

Elsewhere, the Yeagers' scouts realized something was off when Andrew still had

not shown up.

One said, "That bastard's pretty sharp. I'll have to report to the family that he gave

us the slip. But don't worry. He's not getting out of Goldridge."

The scout's face was grim as he ordered the Yeagers to be notified and then mobilized his team for a full-city manhunt.

Back at the hotel, Andrew realized Lauren and the girls had not returned yet. He

pulled out his phone and made a call.

"Hey, honey, we're out shopping!"

Lauren's voice was cheerful and

lively, with background chatter

clearly coming from a busy street.

Andrew chuckled. "Alright, just stay safe and come back soon."

He hung up, then knocked on Zachary's door next door.

Zachary had already changed into

fresh clothes and was just about to

head out. Seeing Andrew, he smiled.

"Captain, if you're tired, you don't

need to come with me! I am already

qualified and need to meet Mr.

Thornton to complete the formal

initiation."

Andrew nodded. "Alright then, I'll stay behind."

Zachary grinned. "Yeah, you should rest up here or find Ms. Rhodes and the girls.

I'll have Ruth come with me instead."

So, the two of them packed up and headed out together.

It was obvious that Zachary was thrilled about being accepted into Jerome's inner

circle, which meant everything to him.

And who could blame him? Up until now, Zachary had only been an outer disciple

under Jerome, which was little more than a formality.

In martial society, outer disciples were seen as glorified errand boys. They had

almost no status.

Only inner disciples, or personal

disciples, were considered true

followers. They were officially

brought into the master's lineage

and guided along their martial path.

Zachary becoming Jerome's student was a huge leap forward.

Andrew felt genuinely happy for him. After all, Jerome was not just any martial artist; he was a martial saint.

Even Andrew had to acknowledge that much.

Chapter 1839

The black luxury car sped out of Goldridge City and finally came to a stop in front of a secluded villa on the southern bank of the Moonveil River.

Scarlett pulled her fur coat tighter around her shoulders and stepped out slowly. In front of the villa, rings of black-suited bodyguards stood layered in formation, and every single one had bulging temples and the aura of a trained killer.

Even Andrew would have thought twice before charging into that kind of formation.

"Ms. Driscoll, this way please," said a man at the entrance, his sleeve tied with a red ribbon. "Mr. Fischer and the other heads of house are already inside."

Scarlett nodded in acknowledgment. The red ribbon was a long-standing emblem of the Fischer family's elite guard.

Inside the first-floor hall, Scarlett entered to find over a dozen individuals already seated in silence.

The hall was completely quiet with no one speaking, and the atmosphere was somewhat oppressive.

By the floor-to-ceiling windows, Henry stood with his hands in his pockets, gazing at the scenery outside. He slowly turned around and nodded to Scarlett. "Have a seat. Let's get down to business."

Facing Henry, Scarlett did not dare put on airs and said obediently, "I'll follow your lead completely, Mr. Fischer!"

Henry sat in the chair by the fireplace, crossed his legs, and said calmly, "Though I'm of the same generation as Mr. Driscoll Senior, the Fischer family has many brothers. I'm actually only three years older than you, Ms. Driscoll, so you don't need to be so formal."

Scarlett took her seat and asked, "So, Mr. Fischer... Are we really doing it tonight?"

Henry waved his hand. "No need to wait for tomorrow. We will act tonight."
Scarlett's eyes widened. "Tonight?"

The others in the room turned sharply toward Henry in surprise. Among them were martial kings and heads of families even more powerful than the Yeagers.

One elderly man in a pristine suit and polished cane tapped his foot heavily and spoke with weight. "Mr. Fischer, changing the plan at the last minute violates every principle of military strategy. We're talking about a coordinated strike on Jerome, and this isn't a joke."

Another raspy and sharp voice came from an old woman with narrow eyes that seemed half-shut. "Mr. Henry, we all agreed the operation would begin tomorrow. Jerome used up a great deal of strength in his duel with Alvaro. It'll take at least three months for him to recover fully."

She continued, "And after the ambush we arranged during his celebration. banquet, his condition has worsened. But don't make the mistake of thinking he's some lamb waiting for slaughter. Even

wounded, his martial prowess is
terrifying. Charging in recklessly
would only get us all killed."

Scarlett, usually arrogant, nodded in agreement. "Mr. Fischer, I think they make a valid point. Jerome has held the Southern Martial Union's top seat for over two decades. Even injured, he's still not to be underestimated."

Henry's face turned cold. "Everyone, stay calm. If I moved the plan up, it's because I've secured a better path forward. Jerome's right-hand man, Alex Wallace, is already mine."

The entire room shifted, and a flicker of shock crossed their faces.

Scarlett stared. "Alex? You bought him off?"

Henry snorted. "Alex has no integrity or principles. He's the type to skim profits even off a basic outer disciple trial. Someone like that? Buying him was laughably easy."

The old man with

the cane shook his

head. "That's not enough. Not by a

long shot, Alex alone can't shake Jerome's foundation. If we want to bring him down, we need to strike where it matters: his body. The only way to win is to cripple his terrifying combat ability. Bribes and turncoats won't cut it."

Henry smiled faintly. "You're right, Mr. Buckner. A low-level pawn like Alex can't shake Jerome's foundation. Jerome himself is the mountain we must climb. That's why I've already secured someone better: his adopted son, Eric Humphrey."

This time, no one objected.

Scarlett laughed out loud. "Mr. Fischer, for the sake of being the next union leader, you really are using every trick in the book!"

Chapter 1840

Henry let out a dismissive snort and said with disdain, "Do you all really think my ambitions stop at replacing Jerome? No, you're dead wrong. I never cared about that Union Leader position. What I want is to defeat Jerome and eliminate the demons from my past!"

Back in the day, Henry, brash and overconfident, once challenged Jerome. As expected, he lost. Even now, with his martial strength nearing perfection and his power unmatched, Jerome remained the thorn in his side.

The others exchanged knowing glances, finally understanding what was really driving Henry.

Scarlett's eyes lit up with bold ambition, and she could not help asking, "Mr. Fischer, since you have no interest in the Union Leader seat... May I recommend myself for the position?"

Henry smirked. "Ms. Driscoll, did you forget you're a woman? I know you've always had a big appetite, Scarlett. You treat Mr. Driscoll Senior like he's already in your pocket. And you've always seen yourself as the queen bee over someone like Joe, a golden boy in his own right.

"Ambition's fine for a woman, but you need the strength to back it up. Forgive my bluntness, Ms. Driscoll, but you're simply not qualified to be Union Leader."

His words were razor-sharp and brutally direct.

Scarlett's face stiffened with frustration. "Maybe I'm not on your level yet, Mr. Fischer. But I've got the whole Driscoll family behind me. My martial strength is still growing, and I could one day break through to become a martial saint. Taking the top seat isn't impossible!"

Henry shook his head again. "Forget it. That role's out of your reach. Trust me... you're not built to handle that position."

Scarlett's pride snapped. "Why not? Can I at least know the reason?"

Henry sneered but did not respond. Before she could press further, the old woman from earlier suddenly struck out with her palm, aiming directly at Scarlett. Scarlett jumped and shouted, "Madam Valencia, what the hell are

you doing?" Scarlett remained unharmed, but the couch beneath her shattered into pieces with a loud crack.

She stared in disbelief. "A force projection? You broke the furniture from a distance with a single palm! Madam Valencia, you've really reached martial saint level?"

Grace Valencia remained expressionless with a trace of disdain at the corner of her mouth "I've spent 60 years cultivating my strength, and even I wouldn't dare dream of that position. And you? You're just a brat from the Driscoll family. What makes you think you deserve it?"

She hissed, "Step aside before everyone here starts thinking you're a clueless airhead, unfit to even join the conversation."

Scarlett's face flushed with humiliation. Though fury simmered in her chest, she lowered her head and muttered, "Understood. I won't let my imagination run wild again."

The regal old gentleman with the cane let out a chuckle. "Now that's more like it. Knowing your place virtue. Alright then. We move tonight Let's all make sure we act as one. Jerome has sat in that chair long enough. Time someone else got a taste of how comfortable the Alliance throne can be."

One by one, the others exited.

Soon, only Henry and Scarlett were left in the grand hall.

Scarlett, still bitter, asked, "Mr. Fischer, why didn't you support me back there? We're both from Gabo

Three Titans. Those Southern

Creek province, both part of Gabo

Martial Union mutts and the dozen brain-dead heads from Goldridge don't deserve a cut of the reward!"

Henry snorted. "It's exactly because we're from the same place that I warned you that the seat is off-limits to you. You know how many eyes are locked onto it right now? Two top-tier families in Goldridge have already shown interest in taking that seat."

Scarlett felt a chill run down her spine. "Even elite families are getting involved?"

Henry nodded. "That's right. Families strong enough to suppress us, the Three Titans, are now making their moves. That gentleman with the cane? He's the steward of the McCormick family. And in terms of raw strength, he's nearly my equal."

Scarlett was stunned into silence.

Equal to Henry? That was the same as saying he could flatten her without breaking a sweat.

This game was getting bigger and more dangerous by the second.

Before she could gather her thoughts, Henry suddenly asked, "What's your opinion on Andrew Lloyd?"