

## RISING FROM THE ASHES (ANDREW AND LAUREN)

### Chapter 1841

"What do you think about Andrew?"

Scarlett was caught off guard by Henry's sudden question. Then, she let out a mocking laugh and said, "Just a nobody. That man's already made it onto my Driscoll family's death list."

Henry shook his head. "Whether your family wants him dead or not, that's not my business. I'm simply asking for your honest assessment of the man. Is he good or bad?"

Scarlett reluctantly replied, "I'll admit, he's not ordinary. He rose quickly in Blumedale and managed to win over Derek and George. Now he's even grown to match the level of the Five Apex Families!"

Henry smiled. "Good, at least you're being fair about it! But there's one thing you've overlooked."

Scarlett looked puzzled. "What's that?"

Henry stood up and walked to the window, clasping his hands behind his back. His eyes glinted with a quiet sharpness as he said in a low voice, "His strength. Back in the main hall, he sent Matthew flying with a single strike. You noticed that, didn't you?"

Scarlett scoffed, unimpressed. "Matthew might have broken into the martial king tier with pills and some sketchy shortcuts. But if we're being real, he's third-rate at best. I could take him out with one hand. So, Andrew knocking him down like that doesn't prove much."

Henry chuckled and said slowly, "Ms. Driscoll, your bias is clouding your judgment. Actually, I'm not even talking about the moment he struck Matthew. I'm talking about the movement right before. He was fast, ghost-like. Even I got caught off guard for a second. It's a shame hardly anyone in the hall noticed it." Scarlett frowned. "Mr. Fischer, what exactly are you trying to say by praising Andrew like this?"

Henry's voice dropped into something colder. "Simple. I plan to bring him under me. Now that Jerome's dead, Goldridge is bound to fall into chaos. After that, the Southern Martial Union will be shaken too. Right now, even though the Fischer family holds the center in Goldridge, we're not strong enough to handle what's coming. I lack a dependable powerhouse, someone who can get things done." Scarlett grew irritated. "So, Mr. Fischer, you're saying I can't go after Andrew anymore?"

Henry answered plainly, "Exactly. At least for now, you're not allowed to touch him. If he refuses to fall in line and doesn't serve my cause, then you can do whatever you want with him later."

Scarlett let out a cold snort, grabbed her purse, and stormed off. She did not dare go against Henry's demand, but it did not bother her too much either. To her, Andrew was still just an ant, and she could crush him whenever she wanted.

For now, there were more important things to deal with.

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At that very moment, Andrew's eyes suddenly snapped open inside the hotel room. A few seconds later, someone knocked on his door.

"Who is it?"

His voice was low as his palm gathered a steady stream of internal energy, ready

to strike at any threat.

Before the knocker even got close, Andrew had already picked up on the sound of their footsteps.

the messy, frantic rhythm, he could tell it was not Lauren or her crew.

"Mr. Lloyd, it's me, Ruth! Zac's in trouble!"

Ruth's voice was shaky and laced with panic as she cried out from the hallway.

Andrew's brows furrowed. He yanked the door open. "What happened?"

The moment Ruth saw him, she collapsed on the floor, still shaken. "Mr. Lloyd, Zac... he's been taken by Mr. Thornton's men! He wants you to meet him."

## Chapter 1842

Ruth shouted, "If you don't go, he'll kill Zac! Mr. Lloyd, please... You have to save him! At this point, you're the only one who can do anything!"

Ruth broke down in tears after that, her shoulders shaking uncontrollably. She was clearly terrified out of her mind.

Andrew helped her up and said, "Tell me everything, from the beginning. Zachary already passed the selection round, wasn't he supposed to become Mr. Thornton's apprentice?"

Ruth sobbed. "That's what we thought when we went there. But before we could even see Mr. Thornton, Mr. Wallace suddenly lashed out and struck Zac

in the chest. He coughed up blood right on the spot and didn't even get a chance to fight back before they had him pinned!"

She added, "Mr. Wallace let me go and told me to bring you this message. If you don't show up soon, Zac's as good as dead!"

Andrew's eyes flashed with cold fury. "That bastard!"

He told Ruth to stay put at the hotel and wait for Lauren and the others to return. Then, he went to the Southern Martial Union's main headquarters alone.

Andrew could not understand why Jerome would do something like this. Logically, holding open tryouts for inner disciples was a positive thing. Yet, Zachary was ambushed and captured when he went to pay his respects as a new apprentice.

The more Andrew thought about it, the more he felt like this trip to Goldridge was dragging them into a much bigger storm. However, he still did not have enough information to see what that storm was exactly.

As the saying went, when titans clashed, it was the little people who died in the crossfire.

Andrew did not fear chaos or conflict, not in the slightest. Nonetheless, just because he did not fear it did not mean he would ignore the people around him.

He came here to back Zachary and help him earn his place as Jerome's inner disciple. Once he started something, he would end it.

Otherwise, with Andrew's sense of danger, he should have gathered Lauren and the others and left Goldridge when things started smelling off.

After all, Henry, Scarlett, and the three ruling leaders from Gabo Creek were all gathered here in Goldridge. With all these major players from the Southern Martial Union, it was obvious that something huge was brewing.

Andrew had sensed it the second he entered this city, but he had brushed it off at the time.

"Stop right there!"

Just as Andrew expected, the moment he arrived at the main gates of the headquarters, he was blocked. This time, though, it was not the same two guards he and Zachary had met before.

It was a full-fledged martial king, and about seven elite fighters were hovering at the peak senior grandmaster level.

This was not just security anymore. It looked more like a lockdown. With this kind of setup, Andrew knew that even he would have to exert some serious effort to break through.

"I'm here to see Mr. Thornton," he said calmly. His eyes caught sight of a red ribbon tied around the martial king's sleeve.

"What business do you have with Mr. Thornton?" The martial king kept his hands tucked inside his wide sleeves. He was a short, elderly man.

He lifted his brows but kept a blank expression as he questioned Andrew.

Andrew looked right at him and replied coolly, "I don't know why he wants to meet me. Why don't you go ask him yourself?"

The old man squinted his narrow eyes, then suddenly raised his hand. "Let him through."

Andrew did not flinch and walked

right past him, brushing shoulders. Their eyes locked in that brief

moment, and Andrew could feel the man's ling intent, ready to explode moment.

This Southern Martial Union headquarters had apparently become a deadly trap,

a place where nine out of ten who entered would never leave alive.

Andrew let out a quiet sigh in his heart.

What the hell was Jerome trying to pull?

He had zero interest in walking into some massive mess the minute be arrived in Goldridge. But at this point, it did not matter what he wanted, because he was already dragged into it.

#### Chapter 1843

The headquarters was massive, and Andrew headed straight for the highest level. Everyone knew that was where Jerome's private quarters were located.

Alex and his men were stationed outside the main hall at the very top. When he saw Andrew approaching, he sneered with a cold smile. "I thought you might be all bark and no bite. I figured you wouldn't have the guts to show up!"

Andrew's expression remained stone-cold. "Where's Zachary? Let him go, and I might spare your life!"

Alex burst into angry laughter. "You arrogant little punk! You've got some serious nerve talking like that. If we actually fought, I could kill you in seconds! Go on in. Zachary's fine; I'm just having a nice chat with Mr. Thornton."

Andrew walked into the side hall and saw three people inside.

One of them was Zachary, seated quietly below. The second was Jerome, a square-faced man with a scholarly appearance,

The third person was a strangely beautiful young man with two long strands of hair falling beside his ears, giving him an incredibly feminine appearance. However, this was not the kind of femininity that made you cringe.

The young man's delicate nature seemed to radiate from his very core. The moment Andrew saw him, he was reminded of those legendary figures from old TV shows who were clearly male yet possessing a grace more ethereal and captivating than that of most women.

When Andrew entered, Zachary stood up and was about to speak. However, Andrew raised a hand to stop him.

From the top seat, Jerome chuckled and studied Andrew. "Dr. Lloyd, please, have a seat. I know it wasn't the most polite way to invite you, but believe me, I had no other choice."

Andrew did not sit. Instead, he asked, "Mr. Thornton, just say what you want. What is this really about?"

Jerome grinned. "I like your style. Direct and no nonsense. I prefer dealing with people like you. Here's the truth... I've been poisoned. I need your help to save my life."

However, his voice was strong, and he looked completely fine, smiling even.

Andrew frowned. "Mr. Thornton, you must be joking. You don't look poisoned at all."

Jerome's smile slowly faded.

Then, Andrew, watched as thick black energy surged up from Jerome's neck and crawled across his face in an instant, it looked like something was slithering beneath his skin. Black veins bulged up like worms, and even his eyes turned blood-red.

It was terrifying.

Jerome's voice grew hoarse and raw. "How about now, Dr. Lloyd? Still think I look full of life? Earlier, used my internal energy to suppress the poison so no one would notice. But what you're seeing now is the real me."

Andrew's eyes narrowed in shock.

This was no mild condition, and Jerome looked like he was on the verge of death. Moreover, Andrew recognized the black energy on his face immediately.

It was Braundville's Frostblossom, the deadliest and most vicious poison from Eastonia's forbidden realm.

Its beauty matched its lethality. The more stunning it looked, the more fatal it became.

"So, it's true that someone from Eastonia tried to assassinate you?" Andrew asked seriously, his tone sharp.

Jerome's face remained grotesque, covered in writhing black streaks. Yet, his voice stayed calm and composed, which meant his martial energy was still strong

enough to hold back the Frostblossom, at least for now.

"Whether it was really someone from Eastonia, we still haven't confirmed. So, I can't make that claim yet. But Dr. Lloyd, I've heard of your name. You took first place at the Gabo Creek's Grand Medical Summit, and they now call you the Grand Physician.

"Even those from the Advanced Medical Institute couldn't match your medical skills. I originally thought Frostblossom was incurable. But when you and Zachary suddenly arrived in Goldridge, it gave me hope!"



Andrew picked up the conversation with a cold tone. "So what you're saying is, you resorted to underhanded tactics by capturing Zachary to blackmail me, right?"

Jerome looked stunned, then his expression immediately turned apologetic.

Just as he was about to speak, the beautiful young man who had been sitting silently finally opened his mouth. His voice was soft and melodious, sounding exactly like a woman's.

"Dad had no choice in this matter. Besides, he didn't know about this plan beforehand. I came up with it entirely on my own."

He lifted his head with a pitiful expression, like a heartbroken maiden gazing sorrowfully at Andrew. "If you want to blame someone, then blame me!"

Andrew's mind went blank for a split second before returning to normal as he replied calmly, "I wouldn't say I blame you. I just don't like being manipulated. By the way, I haven't gotten your name yet. Who might you be?"

The feminine young man smiled, revealing perfectly aligned and crystal-white teeth that could rival those of Lauren or Aspen. "I'm Eric Humphrey, Mr. Thornton's adopted son and also his top disciple!"

Andrew turned his head away, refusing to look at his face. Inwardly, he was deeply alarmed because Eric possessed some seriously twisted martial arts.

If Andrew was not mistaken, this person had mastered some form of high-level charm technique. Simply put, charm techniques were specifically designed to bewitch people's minds, and usually, just making eye contact was enough to trap someone without them realizing it.

Andrew cursed silently, wondering what kind of grown man would practice such methods.

Eric was definitely a strange one!

Meanwhile, seeing Andrew act completely unaffected and deliberately avoid his gaze, Eric could not help but be surprised.

He thought, 'So this guy has some skill after all! He wasn't falling for my charm.'

Still, Eric had not even used his full ability yet. If he activated the technique completely, he was confident he could have Andrew under his control in seconds.

Zachary chuckled awkwardly. "Dr. Lloyd, come on, please take a look at Mr. Thornton's condition. Help him out."

Andrew turned and looked at him. Zachary was speaking to him, but his soul was clearly gone, eyes locked entirely on Eric. His mouth was even hanging open, and drool was about to drip from the corner.

Andrew cursed silently. 'Damn it!'

Even Zachary, a big, burly guy with chest hair, had fallen under the spell.

Eric was seriously dangerous.

What confused Andrew more was why someone like Jerome, a man with such power and influence, would allow Eric to cultivate such dark techniques.

As if sensing Andrew's thoughts, Jerome finally spoke with a weary tone. "Dr. Noyd, please don't judge too harshly. Eric's technique is indeed unusual, but he's never

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it to harm anyone. I raise

myself.

him

"I found him when he was just a child. He'd suffered terrible trauma at a young age, to the point he developed a deep resistance to being a man. And so, well... he turned out like this."

By the end of his explanation, even Jerome sounded embarrassed.

Eric was considered Jerome's successor and praised as the prodigy of Goldridge. Yet his personality was as delicate as a woman's, and his martial arts followed a similarly feminine path.

People who did not know him often cursed him behind his back when they first met.

In truth, Jerome was very fond of this adopted son and treated Eric like his own flesh and blood.

The reason was simple: Eric was genuinely worth it. Despite being under 30, he was already at the top tier of martial kings.

Eric bowed gracefully, his voice melodious as he said, "Please, Dr. Lloyd. Help Dad recover. I'm willing to offer anything in return."

If Andrew had not been looking at his feminine face, he would have sworn the voice belonged to some delicate beauty.

#### Chapter 1845

Jerome let out two shallow coughs, and when he pulled back his white handkerchief, there were faint streaks of black blood.

"Dr. Lloyd, I understand the rules of healing and medicine. It was rude and reckless to bring you here this way. If you're upset and refuse to help, I would understand completely."

Andrew shook his head. "Saving a life is more important than pride. And Mr. Thornton, someone of your stature and reputation deserves better. I have no

reason to refuse. However, the Frostblossom is no ordinary poison, as it's among the deadliest. Even if I do try, fully removing it might be impossible."

Jerome gave a weary smile. "That's alright. If you can suppress it even a little, I'll already be beyond grateful. As for what happens after... well, I'll leave it to fate."

Andrew nodded quietly. Jerome truly lived up to his reputation. He was incredibly calm even in the face of death. Men willing to face their end so openly were rare. "Alright then, I'll give it a try. But before that, I do have one small request."

Andrew spoke up again.

Eric smiled sweetly. "Please, Dr. Lloyd, just say the word. I'll take care of it right away."

Andrew winced. Every time that guy smiled, he felt goosebumps all over. "Earlier, during the selection in the main hall... that guy, Mr. Wallace... I think there's something seriously wrong with him. You might want to discipline him."

Jerome looked surprised. "Alex? Did he offend you in some way?"

Andrew pulled out his phone and played a video showing Alex and Calvin making shady deals behind closed doors. After watching it, Jerome's face darkened. "Alex, come in here."

Alex immediately entered with a respectful bow. "Yes, sir? You called for me?"

Jerome snorted. "You've got nothing to say for yourself? I've warned you more than once. If you work under me, you don't get involved in backroom dealings and dirty tricks!"

The moment Alex saw the video on the phone, his entire face darkened. "Sir, this is a setup!"

Then, he glared at Andrew. "Y-You little punk! Didn't you promise to delete that video?"

Andrew harshly slapped him across the face twice. Blood sprayed from Alex's nose, and he stumbled back.

Andrew retorted, "Delete? What, you thought I wouldn't dare touch you?"

He was not going to let this slimeball walk away without a lesson.

"You're asking for it!" Alex, a martial king-level fighter, instantly flew into a towering rage.

However, before he could make a move, Eric flashed forward and appeared in front of him.

Eric placed both hands on Alex's shoulders and smiled gently. "Admitting fault is the first step to growth. Dr. Lloyd had every reason to be upset. Don't take it personally. Just let it go and step outside."

Alex's face, which had been burning with fury, gradually went blank. He chuckled dully. "Ah... alright, I'll step out for now."

Just like that, his rage vanished without a trace.

Andrew's eyes narrowed. He was genuinely alarmed at how incredibly sinister Eric's ability was.

To hypnotize a martial king on the spot? And instantly, too? That was terrifying.

If Eric ever decided to start using  
that

Citic gaze in public, he brainwash an armel  
easily

a full-blown uprising

and

Eric gave Andrew a shy little smile, then sat off to the side like an obedient little servant, lowering his head without a word.

Andrew suddenly had the urge to leap across the room and beat him senseless.

Why was the creepy little pretty boy smiling at him like that?

If he wanted to charm someone, could he at least find someone else to aim at?

"Mr. Thornton, lie down. We're

starting the treatment." Clearing his mind, Andrew reached into his coat, pulled out a set of golden needles, and began the procedure.