

Rising from the Ashes (Andrew and Lauren)

Back when Andrew first glanced at the token in a hurry, all he saw were tightly packed tiny characters, impossible to make out clearly. Now he finally had the chance to study it thoroughly.

The first thing that caught his eye was two words at the beginning: Inferno Strike.

Andrew's heart stirred as he wondered if this was a martial arts technique. He had no idea what material this token was made from, but it was very light yet constantly felt warm to the touch.

This was definitely not ordinary material.

Andrew focused intently as he read through each tiny character on the token. Finally, he let out a long breath. He was absolutely certain now that this was indeed a martial art technique, and it was a Heavenly-tier one.

In other words, it was a technique reserved for the top tier of martial mastery.

Martial art techniques could be roughly divided into four levels: Heavenly, Earthly, Obscure, and Mortal.

Mortal-tier techniques were fairly common, including basic stuff like military combat forms and standardized close-quarters techniques.

Obscure-tier techniques were much rarer, including techniques like Twelve Shadows Leg Art and Blade of Mad Demons. Many martial artists who reached the martial king level would know some Obscure-tier forms.

Earthly-tier techniques could serve as the crown jewels of major sects. Every single Earthly-tier technique was an undisputed treasure. Examples included the poison arts of the Advanced Medical Institute and the Divine Eighteen Palms of Mistveil Peak.

Meanwhile, Heavenly-tier techniques were extraordinarily rare and could only be encountered by chance. In Holtrien's current martial world, whenever a Heavenly-tier technique appeared, it would inevitably trigger bloodshed and chaos.

Even among the thousand-year-old noble houses and royal bloodlines of Chetvine, Heavenly-tier martial arts were one of the foundations that kept families standing for millennia.

Andrew knew only one Heavenly-tier martial art: Dragon-Slaying Palm. This was the Lloyds royal bloodline's signature technique. With it, he had defeated Stanley, who already possessed martial saint-level combat power.

Without Dragon-Slaying Palm, Andrew would not have been able to kill Stanley.

It was not that martial saints were not powerful; it was that Andrew's techniques were simply too extraordinary. And now, lying before Andrew was yet another Heavenly-tier martial art. His hand holding the token trembled slightly as he took a deep breath.

Jerome had really been incredibly generous to him. He had handed over something so precious and rare without hesitation.

In an instant, Andrew's heart felt heavy with emotion. He absolutely had to take Eric with him. Even though he did not like Eric, he was still Jerome's adopted son.

If Eric continued following Henry, Jerome would suffer unimaginable pain for the rest of his life.

Andrew had never been someone who forgot kindness or abandoned loyalty. On the contrary, when others treated him well, he always repaid them.

As he traced the engraved writing on the token with his fingers, Andrew felt something different on the back side.

When he flipped it over for a closer look, there were actually more small writings on this side, too. However, unlike the front, these were raised engravings, not etched inward.

The words carved on the back read, [This technique was passed down by the third-generation leader of the Southern Martial Union, Apollo West. This art is the natural nemesis of Phantom Mirage and renders it ineffective. Inferno Strike and Phantom Mirage are naturally opposing forces. Where Inferno lands, evil is scorched to ash. Where Phantom walks, souls rot in silence.]

Gripping the token tightly, a grin crept across Andrew's lips. "Eric, you freak... No wonder you're so powerful! So, your Phantom Mirage is actually a Heavenly-tier technique, one of the highest-level techniques out there. But sorry to disappoint you, I'm about to specialize in its natural counter now."

Without hesitation, Andrew immediately began practicing the technique from the token. As soon as he mastered the first level, he would be able to turn the tables.

Rising from the Ashes (Andrew and Lauren)

"Miss, that guy you wanted us to look into is still in Goldridge right now!"

Inside a teahouse in a bustling street in Goldridge, Rowan sat in her white dress listening to her subordinate's report. She asked somewhat impatiently, "Where is he? Is he okay?"

Her subordinate replied, "I don't know if he's okay or not. I just know he's been captured and controlled by Mr. Fischer!"

Rowan's hand trembled slightly, spilling some of her tea as the porcelain cup wobbled in her grip.

Across from her, Evan took it all in silently. He said coldly, "Rowan, no matter how worried you are about him, it's pointless now. He's in Mr. Fischer's hands. Do you really think he still has a chance?"

Rowan did not answer. Her heart was a storm of chaos.

She had not expected that after five years, they would finally cross paths again, only for that bastard to be at death's door before they could even exchange a word.

Evan sneered. "If you ask me, he brought this on himself. Who the hell dares ruin a plan set by Mr. Fischer and the McCormicks? Letting Mr. Thornton go like that? What was he even thinking?"

Rowan snapped, clearly irritated. "Evan, are you done running your mouth? If you're done, then start thinking of a way to save Andrew!"

Evan scoffed. "Andrew? So now you're finally saying his name out loud? Well, let me be real with you: there's no saving him. We Onyx Serpents can barely protect ourselves right now. And that guy? He's in Mr. Fischer's hands! You know what he's capable of, don't you?"

He continued, "He alone is enough to keep the entire Onyx Serpents on edge. Now that the Southern Martial Union's main headquarters has fallen into his hands... the worst for us is yet to come. We're struggling just to survive, so how the hell are we supposed to help someone else?"

Rowan fell silent. Right now, Henry and the McCormicks had officially seized control over the Southern Martial Union's central headquarters. From here on out, they would control Goldridge and command the entire Southern Martial Union. Those who submitted would become allies, little more than lapdogs. Those who resisted? They would be crushed without hesitation.

This was the harsh truth of the martial world: the strong ones made the rules. And those weaker ones? They either bowed or got eaten alive.

"What about Hidden Dragons and the Crimson Alliance? What are they doing?" Rowan asked, her brows tightly furrowed.

Evan scoffed. "Those two? Spineless cowards, the lot of them. They've already started licking Henry's boots."

Rowan let out a helpless sigh. "Got it."

Evan asked, "Rowan, why are you so hell-bent on helping Andrew?"

Rowan answered blankly, "I've told you many times. Five years ago, he saved my life."

Evan slammed the table. "Yeah? And five years ago, Onyx Serpents paid him back for that!"

Rowan's tone chilled. "Maybe Onyx Serpents did. But someone who saved my life deserves more than one paycheck."

Evan scoffed. "Oh yeah? So what's next? Are you going to risk your life for him? Or maybe... offer him yourself?"

That was the final straw. Rowan flung the rest of her tea straight into Evan's face and hissed, "You're disgusting!"

Then, she stormed out of the tea house, her dress whipping behind her.

Evan licked the tea off his cheek and smirked. "You drank it, and now I've tasted it. That counts as our first kiss. Mmm... delicious."

He was clearly a delusional and imaginative guy. Not only did he not get angry, but he actually seemed happy.

Meanwhile, the front gates of the Cantrell family estate in Goldridge exploded inward.

Henry, dressed head-to-toe in black, stormed in with over 100 elite fighters behind him.

Robert Cantrell, head of the household, looked furious as he snapped, "Mr. Fischer, what exactly are you doing?"

Rising from the Ashes (Andrew and Lauren)

Henry said calmly, "Get on your knees and submit."

Robert replied coldly, "Kiss my ass, you piece of shit! Who the hell do you think you are? The Cantrell family only respects Mr. Thornton's orders and only listens to him."

Henry's expression remained unchanged as he suddenly stepped forward. The massive wind pressure blurred Robert's vision, and his hair was blown back. The next moment, he felt a dull thud in his chest as his entire body was sent flying backward.

Blood sprayed onto the marble floor as Robert collapsed, half-dead. He clutched his chest, unable to even sit up. "You..."

Henry's black robe fluttered lightly as he turned away, his voice still cold. "If you don't submit, then no one in the Cantrell family walks out alive."

Without another glance, he moved on, heading straight for the next major force in Goldridge: the McCormick family.

There was a simple and brutal definition of what made an elite family: first, the family had high-ranking figures who could influence both political and business circles. Second, they had top-tier fighters in the martial world.

On offense, they could eliminate other families, gangs, or individuals; on defense, they could keep their family untouchable.

The McCormick family was exactly that kind of house.

Their head butler, Edwin, was already a martial saint. And the family patriarch? Even more terrifying.

"Let Henry do whatever he needs to clean up Goldridge. I've already arranged to have tea with the mayor. Everything can be smoothed over!" Grayson McCormick, head of the McCormick family, stood with his hands behind his back, overlooking all of Goldridge from the family estate.

Edwin respectfully replied, "Understood, sir. It's just that Henry's methods are quite bloody and have caused quite a disturbance... The mayor might object." Grayson chuckled. "I'll give him a reason he can't object to."

His casual confidence was quite impressive, but the McCormick family certainly had the power to back up such arrogance. In Goldridge, he was second only to Jerome in raw martial might.

And that was just in the martial world.

The McCormicks' real strength lay in wealth and political reach, far beyond what someone like Jerome could ever touch.

These were things that pure martial artists like Jerome simply could not compete with.

That was why they said that a 100-year organization was nothing next to a 1000-year family, and the oldest ones? They survived everything.

It was not until late at night that Henry finally returned to the villa, clearly

exhausted. As soon as he walked through the door, Andrew caught a heavy scent of blood lingering on him.

Eric came down the stairs and wrinkled his nose. "You smell awful."

Henry grinned, his eyes burning with desire as he stepped forward and tried to embrace him.

Eric avoided him, frowning. "Mr. Fischer, maybe go take a shower first?"

Henry raised an eyebrow. "You're rejecting me?"

Eric kept a straight face. "Call it whatever you want. You know I like things clean."

Henry smirked. "But you like it rough and big too, don't you?"

Andrew nearly exploded right then and there. He almost sprang up and killed them both on the spot. These two degenerates had no shame and no boundaries.

He turned his attention fully to training Inferno Strike. He could not take another day in this cursed villa. If he stayed even a moment longer, he might lose control.

In the end, Henry backed off and went to shower. When he came out, he was shamelessly flaunting his obviously unimpressive equipment and plopped down right in front of Andrew.

Looking at Andrew, he asked Eric with a smile, "How's the hypnosis working? Can I give him commands?"

Eric nodded, "I've hypnotized him twice now. Simple surface-level commands should work fine!"

Henry was delighted and said to Andrew, "Who are you?"

Andrew looked completely blank and confused.

Henry nodded with satisfaction. "It looks like he's even forgotten his own identity! Phantom Mirage really is amazing!"

After a pause, he asked Andrew again, "Who am I?"

This time, Andrew answered, "You're an idiot!"

Henry and Eric were caught off guard.

Rising from the Ashes (Andrew and Lauren)

Henry's face instantly darkened.

Eric tried to cover for it. "He's probably in a confused state. His mind can't distinguish logic from reality, and that's likely why he said that."

Henry frowned. "Still, calling me an idiot? That's crossing the line."

Eric shook his head. "A truly hypnotized mind doesn't know how to insult. If he said that, there must be some reason behind it."

Henry exploded. "So what, you're saying he had reason to call me an idiot?"

Eric's expression twitched as he tried to explain. "From our perspective, of course, it doesn't make sense, but his mind has entered a chaotic state. Whatever you ask him and whatever he answers no longer follows normal human thought

patterns."

Henry's expression softened slightly. "I get it... You're saying he can no longer tell what he's actually saying! Even though he called me an idiot, he might actually be saying I'm mighty and unyielding, absolutely domineering, right?"

Eric did not want to respond.

Meanwhile, Andrew rolled his eyes silently. He thought the bastard was quite a narcissist.

"You're an idiot!" He opened his mouth and cursed again.

This time, Henry was unfazed and laughed. "See, he's saying I'm absolutely domineering again! Very good! Keep increasing the hypnosis. I want complete control over his mind! Once this little punk is under my control, he'll be like a sharp blade in my hands!"

Eric replied calmly, "Tomorrow, you can take him out for a test run."

Henry nodded. "Perfect."

Finally, Andrew waited until the two degenerates left the room.

That night, Eric once again tried to hypnotize him. But this time, as soon as Phantom Mirage's cold mental haze swept in, Andrew ignited Inferno Strike. His energy core roared like a bonfire, instantly burning away the chill.

Eric collapsed in sweat and exhaustion, thinking the session had worked. Then, he went off to rest.

Andrew stood up like nothing had happened, laughing quietly to himself. Eric's hypnosis barely did anything to him now. Inferno Strike really was extraordinary.

Without wasting time, he spent the entire night in deep training. The technique had three stages: Flame Surge, Volcano Smash, and Tides of Hellfire.

Without even realizing it, Andrew mastered the first stage, Flame Surge, in one smooth breakthrough.

If Jerome had witnessed it, he would probably have been amazed and dumbfounded.

The hardest part about Heavenly-tier martial arts techniques was mastering them. Even if someone was lucky enough to obtain one, learning it was another story.

Therefore, even if they obtained Heavenly-tier techniques by chance, many martial artists could not just become famous overnight and shake the martial world. That was pure fantasy.

This was why some stayed hidden for 20 or even 30 years before finally exploding onto the scene and shocking the martial world.

These techniques were powerful, but mastering them was like climbing through fire.

Yet Andrew easily mastered the first stage in a short time. This could only be because he truly was a prodigy, but there were deeper reasons.

Andrew had already practiced the Heavenly-tier technique Dragon-Slaying Palm, which had laid a solid foundation. Not to mention, Andrew had once stood at the top. His current limitations were due to sealed cultivation, not sealed talent.

Mastering this first level of Flame Surge came so naturally to Andrew that even he was impressed with himself.

Andrew grinned and thought, 'So I really am that guy!'

Before he knew it, dawn had already arrived. Even after an entire night of training, he did not feel tired at all.

Rising from the Ashes (Andrew and Lauren)

That was the beauty of advanced martial arts. The more one trained, the more energized and focused they would become.

Of course, if they lost control, it could backfire fast, leaving their mind agitated and eventually going completely mad.

Henry was dressed in workout clothes and got up even earlier than office workers. By 5 a.m., he was already practicing his breathing techniques and combat drills in the villa courtyard.

At 6 a.m. sharp, he sat down for breakfast. By 6.30 a.m., he grabbed Andrew by the shoulder and dragged him out the door.

The man might have been a feared figure across Goldridge now, but essentially, he was just another poor soul trapped in the grind of endless work. Andrew silently mourned for him... for a brief second.

"Today, I'm putting you to the test! You'll follow my commands, no questions!" Henry barked at Andrew.

Andrew's face stayed blank, like a lifeless puppet.

Henry ordered, "Get in the car!"

Andrew obediently climbed into the vehicle. Then, Henry hit the gas and started driving. Along the way, he picked up some of his subordinates, including that traitor, Alex.

Alex got in the car and asked with a fawning smile, "Mr. Fischer, which family are we taking on today?"

Henry replied coldly, "One of Goldridge's major families, the Yeagers!"

Alex's eyelid twitched as he stammered, "T-The Yeagers won't be easy to deal with!"

Henry sneered. "Even if they're not easy to deal with, we're still going to deal with them! If the Yeagers don't cooperate, I'll leave it to Andrew!"

Alex glanced at Andrew sitting nearby. "Him? Can he handle it?"

Henry said, "Right now, he's a chess piece in my hands that goes wherever I point him. All you need to do is back him up when the time comes."

Alex grinned wickedly. "So you're saying this mutt's already been conquered by Mr. Humphrey's Phantom Mirage? Mr. Fischer, can I test it out?"

Henry's expression remained indifferent. "Do whatever you want!"

Alex rubbed his hands together with a sinister smile. He addressed Andrew,

"Andrew, you little punk, do you still remember me?"

Andrew replied blankly, "I remember... You're a huge idiot!"

Alex was stunned, but he quickly flew into a rage. "Mr. Fischer, this little bastard is perfectly fine! Look, he's cursing at me!"

Henry waved his hand dismissively. "Relax. His mind's numb now. Whatever he says comes out without thought or filter. For all you know, calling you an idiot might've been a compliment."

Alex's mouth twitched violently as he looked uncertain. "Really? Alright, let me test it one more time! Andrew, call me sir!"

Andrew replied, "Bastard, what are you up to?"

Alex's face went pale as he turned to Henry. "Mr. Fischer, why isn't this working?"

Henry sounded annoyed. "I already told you... His brain's fried. You expect a zombie to act like a normal person?"

Alex fell silent, eyes narrowed as he studied Andrew. "You little bastard. Didn't think you'd end up like this, huh? Being someone's lackey, a walking corpse... It sucks, doesn't it? Mr. Fischer, this guy's got smooth skin. Ever thought about selling him off?"

Henry replied coldly, "Not interested. I want his fighting skills, not his ass!"

Alex was about to mock him some more when the car suddenly braked to a stop.

Henry's voice turned ice-cold as he barked, "Get out and surround the place! Andrew, break through the front door for me!"

Rising from the Ashes (Andrew and Lauren)

The Yeagers' front gate flew a dozen meters through the air with a single kick, crashing to the ground as the entire compound was thrown into chaos.

Led by Matthew, over a hundred Yeager family members poured out in full force.

Holding back his rage, he growled, "Mr. Fischer, so you really showed up with your people! While you might be able to make other families and gangs submit, we are not spineless like them!"

Henry crossed his arms and leaned against the car hood, "Whether the Yeagers are spineless or not doesn't matter. What matters is whether the Yeagers know their place and understand how to go with the flow!"

Matthew pointed at him and shouted, "Who the hell do you think you are? What gives you the right to show up here and throw your weight around? The Yeagers have stood strong in Goldridge for over a century.

"Since when do guys like you get to come here and act tough? When Mr. Thornton was still in charge, he treated us with respect! But now that you power-hungry vultures are taking over, it's all about purging dissenters and enforcing submission! We would rather die than become your lapdogs!"

The Yeager guards formed battle lines, each glaring fiercely and showing no fear.

Henry's expression darkened. "You should know that Jerome's era is over! Even the mayor and official authorities have accepted that the Southern Martial Union has a new leader. Why cling to the past and tie yourselves to a sinking ship?"

Matthew spat on the ground, full of contempt. "Let's be real. You're just a Fischer from Gabo Creek. Even if, by some miracle, you really became the Union's new leader, the Yeagers would never acknowledge you."

The Yeagers had long been a major force in Goldridge, and their family boasted martial saints among their ranks.

Henry, after all, was still an outsider. Even though the Fischer family from Gabo Creek had power, they still paled in comparison to the Yeagers when it came to local influence.

That was why Matthew was so angry and contemptuous about Henry showing up at their door.

Henry's face flushed red as he snarled, "Since the Yeagers don't know what's good for them, you leave me with no other choice!"

With his command, Alex and the others charged directly into the compound.

The Yeager guards responded immediately, giving no ground.

Matthew laughed coldly, his robes billowing as he personally joined the fight.

Henry sneered. "Andrew, take out the old mutt!"

Andrew felt a headache coming on, conflicted about whether he should follow orders. If he did not follow orders, Henry would immediately realize he was faking.

"Ha! Andrew, you little beast, you've come at the perfect time!"

While Andrew was struggling with this dilemma, Matthew showed no mercy and leaped up to attack him directly.

"I've wanted your head since the inner disciple selection. Now that you're here, I'll make sure Joseph's humiliation is avenged!"

Since Matthew struck first, Andrew had no reason to hold back. He raised a palm and clashed with him head-

on.

Matthew's face turned red as he coughed up blood, flying backward with a scream.

Henry's eyes lit up with a sharp glint, thinking that Andrew was proving to be very useful.

"You ignorant punk! What gives you the guts to wreak havoc at the Yeager estate?"

A powerful aura suddenly erupted from deeper inside the compound. In just a few steps, a figure soared over rooftops and dropped into the courtyard right in front of Andrew.

From a distance, Andrew exchanged a blow with this suddenly appearing powerhouse. The stone tiles beneath their feet cracked and shattered completely, showing the tremendous force of this exchange.

Adam Yeager, an elderly man with graying hair and a long beard, slowly descended into the Yeager courtyard. The injured Matthew cried out with joy, "Mr. Adam!"

Rising from the Ashes (Andrew and Lauren)

Adam's expression was grim as he nodded. Then, he turned to Andrew and said, "You punk, that palm strike of yours was ferocious! Come on then, let's go another round."

He shifted his stance, fists blazing as he launched a flurry of phantom strikes straight toward Andrew.

Matthew snarled, "You little bastard, that's one of the Yeagers' two founding elders! He's a full-fledged martial saint. Killing you will be effortless!"

Andrew remained expressionless as he clashed head-on with Adam. This was exactly what he needed: a powerful opponent to test out Inferno Strike. He wanted to see just how brutal the Heavenly-tier martial arts technique was.

As the two went blow for blow, Andrew fully committed to the fight, matching Adam with every strike.

Meanwhile, Alex and the others were being systematically suppressed by the Yeager guards, unable to gain any advantage whatsoever.

Henry frowned deeply. Unlike the Cantrells, the Yeagers were a whole different beast. With a grunt, he prepared to leap into the chaos and rip through the Yeager guards himself.

But before he could, a booming voice echoed through the courtyard like thunder. "If you go too far today, you might just lose your place in Goldridge altogether!"

The voice came from deep within the Yeager compound, rich, commanding, and full of power.

Henry's expression changed instantly. "You're still alive, Mr. Isaiah?"

From the shadows, Isaiah Yeager, the unseen elder, scoffed. "I still have a few years left in me. Henry, have you stooped so low to be the McCormick family's attack dog, coming here to force the Yeagers into submission? Let me make this clear. If you so much as lift a finger today, I'll kill you where you stand."

Henry narrowed his eyes. "Maybe it's me now, but what if the McCormick family's top fighters show up next? Whether you like it or not, the Yeagers will have no choice but to submit."

Isaiah replied with pride, "Let them come. Let them all try. We have stood tall in Goldridge for centuries. We've faced storms before."

Henry stayed quiet, his expression growing uglier by the second. He knew full well the McCormick family had chosen to operate from behind the scenes. They pushed him into the spotlight exactly so they would not have to dirty their hands.

His threat had just been a bluff.

The McCormick family sat on a throne of power and influence; they would not step in directly unless absolutely necessary.

Henry's men could attack, but he himself could not make a move. If he did, the mysterious Isaiah would come straight for his throat. If that happened, with two martial saints crushing him from both sides, he would be lucky to survive.

His gaze shifted to Andrew, and he clenched his fists, secretly hoping Andrew would just kill Adam already. That way, the odds might finally tip in his favor.

However, over at the center of the battlefield, Andrew and Adam were locked in a fierce, evenly matched battle. They traded brutal blows, yet neither had gained the upper hand.

As for Alex and the rest, they were already falling apart, crying out in pain as they dropped one by one.

"Damn it, this is turning into a bloodbath!" Henry cursed under his breath.

He and Andrew could hold their own in the Yeager compound, but the rest of his crew? They were absolutely useless.

The Yeager guards were not amateurs; they struck with precision and force.

A group of martial kings flanked Alex, and one whip lashed across his ear, sending blood flying as half his face split open. His ear was gone entirely.

"Mr. Fischer! We're screwed! We need to get the hell out of here!" Alex screamed in panic, completely losing

it.

More screams rang out, and Henry's men fell like dominoes, their bodies piling across the ground.

Henry did not hesitate and barked, "Retreat! Andrew! Don't get caught up... Pull back!"

Rising from the Ashes (Andrew and Lauren)

The moment Henry gave the retreat order, Alex and the others fled like prisoners granted a last-minute pardon.

Andrew had already been itching to leave, so he fought Adam while slowly falling back with him.

"You sons of bitches came storming in here, and now you want to walk out like nothing happened? Not a chance!" Adam roared, completely fired up.

He went all-in, refusing to let Andrew slip away. However, Andrew did not hold back either, blasting him over and over with Inferno Strike.

Each time their palms collided, Adam felt like his hands had been seared by red-hot irons.

"Damn! What the hell kind of technique is this?" he hissed through clenched teeth.

After a few more hits, he glanced at his hands and froze. They looked like overboiled meat, red and steaming.

"What on earth..." In an instant, Adam became wary.

Taking advantage of this opportunity, Andrew stomped the ground and slid backward dozens of meters, instantly catching up to Alex. Then, he grabbed Alex by the collar and hurled him back toward Adam.

"What the hell are you doing? Let me go! No, no, no..." Alex screamed, his voice cracking in sheer terror.

Adam was in a murderous rage, and his killing intent exploded. Without any hesitation, he raised his palm and blasted Alex into pieces.

Henry led the retreat with Andrew close behind, followed by the remaining defeated martial artists. Half an hour later, everyone finally escaped the Yeagers and could catch their breath.

Henry's eyes flashed with deadly light as he grabbed Andrew by the collar, shouting, "Why did you kill Alex? Tell me!"

Andrew stared at him with a numb expression and empty eyes.

Henry was stunned for a long time before gritting his teeth. "Damn it, this guy's condition is still unstable! He can't tell the difference between enemies and allies yet... Poor Alex died for nothing!"

He released Andrew's collar and straightened his clothes, then nodded. "Not bad! Your performance on the first day was quite impressive! At least you could hold your own against Adam!"

When we get back, I'll have Eric hypnotize and control your mind further. I want a puppet that obeys orders completely!"

Andrew remained expressionless like an emotionless robot. Inside, he was already overjoyed. Playing dumb was quite comfortable, and he had managed to get Alex killed without lifting a finger.

He could not help but wonder if the latter, from beyond the grave, would feel it was a justified death.

What delighted Andrew even more was Inferno Strike's domineering and vicious nature. It truly lived up to being a Heavenly-tier technique as it was incredibly fierce in combat.

Especially the flame power contained within Inferno Strike. Every attack made enemies feel like fire was drilling into their meridians, causing burning pain throughout their bodies.

Andrew felt like he had hit the jackpot for the first time in a long while. With Inferno Strike at his command, he no longer feared Eric or even Henry combined.

One was a high-level martial saint, and the other possessed Heavenly-tier divine techniques. Together, they formed an invincible combination.

Nonetheless, Andrew was determined to give them a lesson.

Later, Henry brought Andrew back to the villa at Mount Zircon.

The moment they stepped inside, Eric looked up and frowned. "You failed, didn't you?"

Henry looked annoyed and nodded. "Yeah, we did. The two elders from the Yeagers were no joke. I didn't even get a shot in."

Eric asked, "And Andrew? Was he useful?"

Henry, surprisingly, smiled. "Oh yeah, definitely. This guy's got talent. He's been hiding it well. He went head- to-head with Adam, a martial saint, and was evenly matched."

Eric frowned. "He's really that strong?"

Henry chuckled. "What's wrong? You don't believe me? Or are you just jealous?"

Rising from the Ashes (Andrew and Lauren)

Eric replied coldly, "I don't believe it, but I'm not jealous either! Phantom Mirage has slow cultivation progress. That's a common trait of Heavenly-tier martial arts technique! Even though I'm only at the peak of martial king right now, Andrew is still completely under my control!"

Henry nodded. "That's true."

Andrew secretly rolled his eyes. Eric was putting on quite the act. Just wait, he would soon learn what scorching heat really felt like.

Henry reminded him, "There's one problem, though... This kid's behavior is still somewhat erratic, and he can't tell right from wrong! You need to hurry up and hypnotize him again. I want to train him into a killing machine that follows orders without question!"

Eric grunted in acknowledgment, turned to face Andrew, and activated his mystical technique once more!

Andrew sneered inwardly at the sight of Eric sweating profusely with a pale face, looking quite miserable. Once Inferno Strike was activated, the Flame Surge flowed from his energy core through a complete circulation, and he was not affected at all.

Andrew had truly achieved complete immunity to Phantom Mirage.

Next, he just needed to find an opportunity to take Eric out of the city and into open waters.

The landline phone by the couch rang, and Henry answered, "Mr. Pennyworth!"

On the other end, Edwin, the butler of the elite McCormick family, said, "Mr. Fischer, it seems you failed at the Yeagers!"

Henry replied grimly, "Don't worry, Mr. Pennyworth, I'll find another way!"

Edwin snorted coldly. "What do you mean don't worry? The mayor and Jerome's die-hard loyalists are getting impatient! Especially the mayor... He really doesn't want to see us making such a big commotion! The bottom line is: speed up your actions! If you can't deliver, the McCormick family will find someone who can." Henry was not the type to be pushed around and sneered, "Mr. Pennyworth, is there anyone more suited than me to get this job done? If the McCormick family wants to replace me, go ahead and send your own enforcers. But that would be a bad look, wouldn't it? You start making moves out in the open, and certain powerful forces in Goldridge won't sit still."

Edwin's tone stayed cold. "You're not as irreplaceable as you think, Mr. Fischer. There's already someone waiting."

Henry narrowed his eyes. "Who?"

Just then, the villa's doorbell rang.

On the other end of the line, Edwin chuckled. "Well, looks like they've arrived. Go open the door and see for yourself."

With that, he hung up.

Henry walked to the door with a dark expression and opened it.

Scarlett walked in with a bright smile.

Henry squinted. "The Driscoll family, huh? What, you trying to snatch food from my plate now? Undercut me from the inside?"

Scarlett remained unfazed. "No need to be so defensive, Mr. Fischer. Jerome's spot is still up for grabs, after all. This Southern Martial Union prize is a fat one. You think you can eat the whole thing by yourself? Relax. I'm not here to steal anything. But if you can't handle the Yeagers, I won't hesitate to step in."

Henry snorted. "Then why don't you share your brilliant ideas? I'm all ears."

Scarlett spoke smoothly. "Brute force won't work. They've got two elders anchoring them. Unless the elite families get directly involved, we're just wasting time."

Henry stayed quiet, waiting for her to continue.

Scarlett smiled faintly. "We do what we did before. Remember how we used Frostblossom to weaken Jerome? This time, we hit the Yeagers' elders the same way."

Andrew stood silently nearby, and even he had to admit that Scarlett was downright savage. She was as dangerous as she was clever.

Rising from the Ashes (Andrew and Lauren)

Henry was convinced and narrowed his eyes. "Go on. How do you plan to use poison?"

Scarlett flipped her mink coat, revealing her ample chest, and smiled. "I've slept with that little brat Joseph from the Yeagers twice already. This kid's really pathetic in the Yeagers. He's over 20 but clearly hasn't had much experience with women. He submitted to my charms in no time!"

She added, "Now, when I say east, he goes east. When I say west, he doesn't dare head any other way."

Henry frowned. "Your looks are..... average. You really think Joseph fell for that?"

Scarlett's smile froze as her tone turned sharp. "Sure, my face isn't much, but I have a great body! My martial arts skills are impressive enough to command respect, and Joseph is just a naive kid. Sleeping with me gives his ego a huge boost!

"What good are pretty faces? What really satisfies men are women who wield power and strength, and I happen to be exactly that type. I have both power and influence!"

Henry nodded in agreement. He could not argue with the logic. "One last question. Can you guarantee Joseph will obey you?"

Scarlett snorted coldly, "Of course! That horny little bastard acts like he's been caged for centuries. Every chance he gets, he's crawling back for more. But I deliberately keep him hanging, letting him see and touch, but never fully satisfying him!

"The moment we're ready to strike, I'll promise him another round. For that, he'll betray his whole family just like that."

Henry said, "Alright then, let's work together and take down the Yeagers first! For safety's sake, bring that Joseph over here. I'll have Eric hypnotize him to ensure everything goes perfectly!"

Scarlett giggled charmingly. "It's a deal! But afterward, I hope you'll support me in taking the Union leader position, Mr. Fischer!"

Henry frowned. "At this point, you're still obsessing over that position? I'm warning you... That position is now controlled by the McCormick family. They want a puppet. Do you think sitting in that chair would mean anything? You don't actually think you'd be the real leader if you got that position, do you?"

Scarlett gritted her teeth. "I don't care about being the McCormick family's puppet; I only care about having held the title! Besides, the Driscoll family has already started making moves in Gabo Creek! This leader title might be just for show, but it's still handy."

Henry smiled. "Oh? The Driscoll family has already made moves in Gabo Creek? Care to share some details?"

Scarlett replied proudly, "There's nothing I can't tell you. First, all the martial arts gangs and fighters in Gabo Creek territory will have to follow the Driscoll family's orders! Second, Derek's good days as governor are about to end!

"He's repeatedly opposed the Driscoll family because of Andrew! The trap I've set this time is no small matter! Neither Derek nor the Keller family in Blumedale will walk away unscathed."

Henry shook his head. "Taking down the Kellers is one thing. But going after Derek? That's wishful thinking. Derek's a state-level official and a heavyweight. And more importantly, the Phelan family likes him a lot."