

Are Mine 1281

[Chapter 1281 The Winner Gives the Loser Three Slaps](#)

It was too late even if Sonia regretted it.

She could only watch with jealousy as Abel held Emmeline in his arms and trained her for over ten minutes.

For a moment, she consoled herself, imagining that the woman in Abel's arms right then was herself. But with a thud of the cue ball hitting and a click as it dropped into the pocket, Sonia snapped back to reality.

She could dream all she wanted, but the woman in Abel's arms still wouldn't be her.

Emmeline Louise! Sonia mused as a malicious grin flashed across her eyes. Let's see if you can remain smug after I defeat you!

"Alright, shall we begin?" Emmeline asked nonchalantly.

She had already figured out that if Abel continued to teach her like this, Sonia might faint on the spot.

Maybe it's better not to annoy her further.

"Alright," Sonia said with a stern face. "How do you want to compete?"

"Best of three games?" proposed Emmeline.

"Alright, best of three it is," Sonia agreed. "What's the wager?"

"What do you want to play for?" Emmeline asked with a smile.

She was confident that no matter what the wager was, she wasn't afraid. Her only fear was that what she could come up with might not be as ruthless as what Sonia had in mind.

"The winner gives the loser three slaps!" growled Sonia.

She could see that Emmeline was pretty mediocre at pool, even with Abel's guidance. She hadn't practiced the techniques, so it was like going into battle unprepared. But Sonia was different; she had been hanging around pool tables since middle school, through high school, and into college.

She even had special training and competitions in Melvania. So, defeating a "rookie" like Emmeline would be a piece of cake for her.

"Alright, it's a deal, Emmeline said. "The winner gets to give the loser three slaps. May the best player win!"

"Okay," Sonia said, "each of us at a separate table, clean break, and we take turns winning or losing!"

Two assistant coaches each served one table, and even Tony felt nervous.

He handed a cigarette to Abel, and the two of them moved away from the pool table. Tony whispered, "Mr. Abel, this doesn't look like a good idea."

Abel lit his cigarette, took a leisurely puff, and smiled. "Just watch. Why panic?"

Tony took a drag from his cigarette and fell silent, his gaze fixed on the pool table.

If Abel could stay so composed, it was likely that there wasn't a major issue. However, he had witnessed Sonia's skills, which were indeed impressive, and she had experience in competitions.

This was his first time seeing Emmeline play, and it was evident that she wasn't a professional. So Tony couldn't help but worry. "Mr. Abel, I'm concerned Emmeline might be at a disadvantage."

Abel Ryker chuckled. "Chill and watch."

Tony shrugged, not saying anything more.

To be honest, although Abel had taught Emmeline a few techniques, she lacked practical experience. He had some uncertainties in his mind. However, he also thought that even if Emmeline couldn't perform well, he could step in personally.

At the end of the day, Sonia was only looking to spar with him. So, no matter what, he had to protect his wife and ensure she didn't suffer any grievances.

How could he allow others to slap his beloved wife when not even he had the heart to be stern with her?! With this in mind, Abel remained composed.

At that, he glanced at his dear wife, who appeared calm and relaxed, with a joyful demeanor. Is this the confidence of a fearless newbie, or does she have a trick up her sleeve?

The assistant coaches racked the balls, and they each took their turns.

In the first game, Sonia cleared the table in three minutes while Emmeline took three and a half minutes, making Sonia the winner of the first round.

"The next game will become the decider, Ms. Louise," Sonia said with a sly smile.

"Let's continue then" Emmeline replied with a smile. "Why waste time talking?"

[Chapter 1282 I Have Faith in You](#)

"Emma," Abel asked softly with furrowed brows. "Can you handle it?"

"I'd be doing my husband a disgrace if I can't handle it," said Emmeline with a smile, "especially when he had personally taught me."

"What if I step in?" Abel asked, his voice tinged with concern.

"Underestimating me?" Emmeline pouted. "Just stay aside and watch the game silently!"

Instantly, Abel sealed his lips, and Tony, too, despite his growing anxiety, didn't dare. anything either.

Both of them could tell Emmeline was calm and composed. However, her confident demeanor left them wondering what she had up her sleeve.

After preparing the pool table, they began the second game.

This time, Emmeline played steadily, never missing a shot, and cleared the table in three minutes. Sonia, on the other hand, took three minutes and seven seconds.

Emmeline won the second game, evening the score, and the tension in the air intensified.

It all came down to the final game!

Sonia had become grim at this point. She assumed there wouldn't be a third game as she felt confident in her victory after the first two games. She had never expected Emmeline, this dark horse, to turn the tide.

The current situation, where victory could swing either way, made Sonia's palms sweat.

"Winner slaps the loser three times," she reminded herself, not wanting to shoot herself in the foot.

"Shall we continue?" Emmeline said with a smiling grace to Sonia.

Sonia nodded, her gaze steely. "Let's begin!" She was determined not to lose!

In the third game, Sonia played fast and precise. In less than three minutes, only two balls were left on the table.

She glanced over at Emmeline's side-four balls left!

Haha, Sonia couldn't help but chuckle. You're definitely going to lose this time, Louise!

On Emmeline's side, she positioned herself to make a shot, about to bend over to hit the ball, when Sonia suddenly called out, "Hold on!"

Emmeline straightened up and asked, "What's wrong?"

"It's quite obvious," Sonia said, "Emmeline, you've already lost!"

"Who said I've lost?" Emmeline quirked a brow while smiling playfully. "We haven't finished the game yet, have we?"

"I have two balls left," Sonia said, "one per shot, just two turns. What about you? Even if make every shot perfectly, you still need four turns, don't you?"

"How do you know I'll make one shot per turn?" Emmeline's eyes twinkled mischievously. "Maybe I'll surprise you."

"That's impossible," Sonia replied. "Next, we'll take turns, one shot each, and then it will be clear."

"Okay!" Emmeline nodded. "I'll go along with that. You start first!"

"I start first?" Sonia thought Emmeline might be a bit naive. She would start, and she only had one ball left. If she was lucky, the final black ball might roll in by itself.

Emmeline asked.

"You can start first!" Sonia said. "It's the same." After all, she only had two turns left.

Emmeline, on the other hand, wasn't so certain. One shot per turn meant she needed four turns. If she missed any shots, it could take even more, potentially five or six turns. As such, Sonia knew she had already won.

"Well, I'll gladly take your offer then," Emmeline replied. "Ms. Steiner, don't blame me if you regret it later."

"Hmph!" Sonia sneered, "Enough talk, let's begin!"

Emmeline picked up her cue and blew on it, saying, "Heavenly spirits, my cue, please show your magic!"

Sonia couldn't help but laugh.

Haha! What kind of woman has Abel gotten himself?! To resort to superstition when she lacks the skill!

"Emma Babe," Abel cheered Emmeline on, "go for it! I have faith in you!"

Tony stood on the side, arms crossed, thinking, Come on, dude, you can't have blind faith in your wife! How is she going to win under such circumstances?!

The two assistant coaches were feeling quite helpless as well. They were inclined to support Emmeline because she was the boss' friend and seemed more affable.

Who does Sonia Steiner think she is anyway? All arrogant and unlikable. In this day and age, nobody's beneath anybody! But despite their bias toward Emmeline, the current situation was clear- there was a significant difference in skill, and the outcome was apparent.

"Well then, I'll start!" Emmeline held the cue, positioned herself, and smiled gracefully.

Sonia narrowed her eyes and smirked. This position? Ha! You must be an idiot to believe you can sink a ball from there!

[Chapter 1283 If You Can't Handle Losing, Don't Compete With Me](#)

Emmeline bent over at her position, gracefully extended her arm, aimed her cue at the black ball, and flicked her wrist.

Bang! The black ball rolled out but didn't hit any other balls.

Sonia chuckled in disbelief. Haha, Emmeline, you're toast!

However....

The black ball rolled leisurely along the edge of the table, rebounded back, and with a subtle force, it struck two striped balls with a bang, knocking them into the pockets.

Tony and the two assistant coaches gasped in astonishment. Oh my goodness, Emmeline can play like that?

Now, only two balls were left on Emmeline's pool table.

There was a technique in pool like this, but it demanded precise control of strength and follow-through. It was akin to martial artists using their inner power skillfully, achieving extraordinary results with less effort.

Tony suddenly realized that Abel had taught Emmeline the technique, but she was a martial artist herself, and her skills weren't just for show either, so that was how they were witnessing this incredible turn of events.

Sonia was left dumbfounded. The black ball on the table hadn't stopped moving, and her eyes followed its course.

After knocking down two striped balls, the black ball spun around and knocked down another striped ball.

With a click, the ball dropped into the pocket, and only the black ball remained on the table.

"Go in, go in!" Emmeline held her cue and chanted playfully, "Come on, good ball, go in!"

The black ball, as if it understood her words, rolled faster and faster, and with a final click, it dropped into a corner pocket.

One shot, four balls down—a complete victory!

Emmeline cheekily grazed her nose with a fist, her lovely face beaming with a smile.

Sonia sat down on the floor, and her friend sitting next to her quickly helped her up.

Lose gracefully.

Abel smiled and said to Emmeline, "You're amazing, Babe! You learned it in one lesson!"

Emmeline raised her thumb and grinned at him. "You're amazing, Hubby!"

Tony wiped the sweat from his forehead and said, "Just when I thought I'd seen it all, Emmeline!"

The two assistant coaches surrounded Emmeline and asked, "Mrs. Ryker, how did you do that?"

Emmeline happily replied, "I said it, didn't I? My husband taught me."

"Mr. Abel, Mr. Abel!" the two assistant coaches turned to Abel. "Please, teach us too. It can sustain us for a lifetime!"

Tony added, "You'll need at least three years of inner strength training to master this skill."

The two assistant coaches wondered, Do we need inner strength for this? Is Mrs. Ryker a martial arts expert?

Emmeline walked up to Sonia, towering over her by several inches. "Ms. Steiner," she said, "we agreed on the terms: the winner slaps the loser three times."

Sonia hesitated. She felt like dying inside.

"Three slaps." Emmeline tilted her head and examined Sonia's pretty face teasingly. "Which side would you like me to start with? You're so delicate; I almost can't bear to do it."

“Louise!” Sonia suddenly lunged forward, trying to grab Emmeline’s face. “Don’t you dare cross the line!”

Slap, slap! Before she could get close, Emmeline swiftly struck Sonia with two slaps, sending her back into the corner of the room.

“I didn’t want to hit you in the first place!” Emmeline quirked a brow angrily. “I didn’t want to dirty my hands, but you brought this upon yourself with these two slaps!”

Sonia fell to the corner, her cheeks visibly red and swollen from the strikes.

“You really have no shame!” Emmeline sneered at her. “If you can’t handle losing, then don’t compete with me. Why do you lack sportsmanship like this every time? It’s so pathetic!”

No wonder Abel didn’t take a liking to you in the first place!

Sonia covered her face, tears of humiliation streaming down her cheeks.

She seethed with rage as she mused. Since I can’t beat you, don’t blame me for using my trump card, Louise! Just you wait! Let’s see who gets the last laugh during Old Mr. Ryker’s eightieth birthday Haha, by then, you won’t even know how you’ll meet your end!

After Sonia left in haste, Tony invited Abel and Emmeline to the lounge for a drink.

The three of them chatted about various topics.

Emmeline persuaded Tony to share some embarrassing stories from Abel’s high school days.

Tony couldn’t resist and ended up telling her a few of Abel’s high school mishaps.

Emmeline burst into laughter while Abel wore a dark expression. He didn’t know whether to be angry or not. But seeing his beloved wife so joyful, he couldn’t genuinely be upset.

[Chapter 1284 Oscar’s Eightieth Birthday Celebration](#)

Oscar’s eightieth birthday celebration was held at the Ryker’s residence, which itself was an estate nestled against the mountains and waters.

Several days prior to his birthday, Oscar had the entire estate beautifully decorated. The old estate, situated amidst the mountains and waters, was essentially a picturesque area.

Oscar preferred a low-key celebration. However, even in its understated nature, more than three hundred people attended the event.

Guests from both Struyria and various parts of the world gathered. The entire Ryker’s residence was abuzz with activity.

Before lunchtime, guests either enjoyed wine and conversation in the hall or danced in pairs. on the dance floor.

At around 10 a.m., the emcee announced that there would be a Struyrian opera performance in the garden for those interested. Abel held Emmeline’s hand and asked her, “Would you like to go and watch the Struyrian opera?”

Emmeline smiled, "You're interested in traditional culture?"

"To be honest, I don't really understand it," Abel admitted, "but it looks lively, especially the fight scenes; the actors are skilled martial artists."

"You've piqued my interest," Emmeline said. "Let's go take a look."

The two of them were about to leave the hall when Emmeline tugged at Abel's arm.

"What's wrong?" Abel asked, concerned.

Emmeline's eyes had a hint of worry as she said, "Once bitten, twice shy. Will our kids be okay?"

Abel wrapped his arm around her waist and planted a kiss on her forehead. "Don't worry, Babe. I've personally arranged all the security measures for today, and Luca and the others are watching our boys closely. You don't need to worry about anything. Just relax and enjoy the party."

Emmeline thought for a moment. Luca and the others were with the boys, and Sam and Daisy were close by too. There really wasn't much to be worried about.

Waylon and Benjamin had also offered to send bodyguards to her side beforehand. However, she turned them down.

Benjamin and Waylon couldn't attend Oscar's big day. Well, it was no secret among Struyrians that Ryker Group and Adelmars Group were fierce rivals in the business world.

Secondly, there had been a longstanding feud between Oscar and The Adelmars Clan, so naturally, members of the Adelmars family couldn't come either.

Hand in hand, they left the hall and headed to the garden to watch the Struyrian opera.

At this moment, Oscar was also enjoying the Struyrian opera.

In the garden, several rows of large round redwood tables were set up, with guests seated around them. Tea, drinks, snacks, and desserts were placed on the tables. Guests watched the performance while indulging in refreshments and enjoying themselves.

Oscar sat at the first table, mingling with the crowd.

Around him were some of the top aristocratic families from Struyria, as well as several high-ranking officials. It was said that even higher authorities had sent representatives, highlighting the Ryker family's status.

Glenn and his wife were among the guests, and their daughter, Sonia, stood obediently by the side, serving Oscar tea.

"Sonia is becoming more beautiful as she ages," Oscar remarked to Glenn. "I remember back when Abel and Sonia were dating."

"You still remember that, Old Mr. Ryker?" Glenn replied. "Too bad Abel's children are nearly five now..."

"That's my own oversight," Oscar said. "I regret not pushing Abel and Sonia to marry earlier."

“Abel’s wife is pretty lovely, no?” Michaela chimed in with a mischievous smile. “And she’s given the Ryker family four adorable great-grandsons.”

“I do love the boys,” Oscar admitted. “Otherwise, I wouldn’t have any regard for that girl, Emmeline.”

“What’s wrong with Emmeline?” Sonia asked as she filled Oscar’s tea cup. “Care to share, Grandfather?”

“That girl is too wild; she doesn’t obey,” Oscar said, sipping his tea. “And she’s challenged me more than once. If not for the sake of those four great-grandchildren, I’d have kicked her out!”

“Oh,” Michaela said, “Why not arrange a separation? It’s not uncommon among the elite families.”

“That’s easier said than done,” Oscar replied. “Abel defends his wife fiercely, and Emmeline. has been behaving well as well. How can I break up a loving couple?”

[Chapter 1285 Sonia’s Opera Performance.](#)

“That’s right, that’s right!” Glenn picked up the teapot and filled Oscar’s cup with tea. “You’re absolutely right, Old Mr. Ryker. Children and grandchildren have their own blessings.”

“But our Sonia still loves Abel deeply.” Michaela’s eyes welled up with tears. “Abel is married and has children now, but my poor Sonia...”

“What are you talking about?!” Glenn scolded his wife with a glance. “Don’t bring up anything. you shouldn’t!”

“I’m just speaking the truth,” Michaela said, turning to Sonia. “Don’t you agree, Sonia?”

“Mom,” Sonia feigned benignly and said, “love can’t be forced. Abel and I were fated to be apart. Let’s move on from this.”

“Sonia is truly sensible and magnanimous,” Oscar commended. “That’s why I was so fond of Sonia from the beginning. Shame; Sonia and Abel are fated to be apart. Able isn’t your lucky guy.”

“Old Mr. Ryker,” Michaela said while handing Oscar some snacks. “If things change in the future and Sonia and Abel happen to find themselves connected by fate again, you must play a role in their happiness!”

“Don’t speak recklessly!” Glenn lightly slapped his wife’s arm, giving her a stern look as if saying, ‘Don’t provoke Abel!’ However, Michaela made nothing of it and even added, “Old Mr. Ryker, please look out for Sonia.”

“Well...” Oscar wasn’t oblivious to Michaela’s intentions. He said, “If Sonia meets a good young man from a respectable family, I will definitely support her. As for Abel, Sonia will have to give up on him. The young couple are in talks of giving me great-granddaughters. Haha, I’m just missing a few great-granddaughters now!”

Sonia turned grim, and she almost blurted out, “I can give you great-granddaughters too!” But no matter how thick-skinned she was, she knew she couldn’t say that right then.

As shameless as she could get, her father still needed to retain his dignity, no? After all, he held the highest office in Struyria’s political scene.

Michaela read her daughter's thoughts and winked at her.

Sonia knew her mother was telling her that she had everything prepared.

This is where you meet your end, Louise!

Abel and Emmeline approached the stage and noticed the Steiner Family surrounding Old

Mr. Ryker. Both of them furrowed their brows slightly. However, with Old Mr. Ryker present, they couldn't avoid greeting them.

Abel patted Emmeline's hand and whispered, "We'll go watch the Struyrian opera aside after saying hello to Grandfather. If you don't like it, you don't have to interact with the Steiner Family, no big deal."

"Okay," Emmeline nodded, linking arms with Abel, and they walked toward the first round table. Coincidentally, when Sonia turned her head, she also saw Abel and Emmeline.

She immediately put on a smiling face and sweetly said, "Hello, Mr. Abel."

Abel didn't respond to her and went straight to Old Mr. Ryker, saying, "Grandfather, Emma and I wish you boundless blessings and longevity!"

"Thank you." Old Mr. Ryker nodded. "Have the munchkins come?"

"They have, Grandfather," Emmeline replied with a smile. "Later, I'll have them wish happy birthday. May you be happy and live as long as the southern mountains!"

"Good girl!" Old Mr. Ryker nodded. "You're being sweet with your words, but giving me a couple of great-granddaughters is the way to go."

Emmeline blushed and lowered her long eyelashes. "I understand, Grandfather."

"Mm." Old Mr. Ryker hummed. "Have a seat, have some tea, and watch the opera."

"Grandfather," Sonia squeezed her way over. "how about I sing you an aria? It'll add to the celebration!"

"You sing opera?" Old Mr. Ryker was surprised. "Young people nowadays don't often enjoy opera, and those who can sing it are even rarer!"

Sonia looked a bit smug and glanced at Emmeline. "Grandfather, I can be considered at master of many arts. I'm proficient in everything, even singing Struyrian opera. I learned from a famous performer."

"That's remarkable!" Oscar was delighted. "In that case, Sonia, take the stage and sing at segment for me. I'll give you a precious gift!"

"Thank you, Grandfather!" Sonia, seeing that she had won Old Mr. Ryker's favor, felt quite proud and glanced at Emmeline again.

The implication was clear: if you're so great, compete in opera singing against me!

[Chapter 1286 Sonia Treating Sonia as a Thespian](#)

Emmeline had no intention of competing with Sonia in singing because she simply couldn't sing. However, she would gladly sit in the audience and enjoy the show if Sonia was willing to make herself a Thespian.

Sonia, wearing high heels, gracefully ascended the stage.

She exchanged a word with the accompanist, and the musicians began to play 'Un bel di vedremo.

Sonia positioned herself on the stage, looking the part, and with a clear and bright voice, she started singing. Oscar applauded, "Excellent!"

Emmeline joined in with the applause. "Brava!"

Abel stood by, chuckling.

"Un bel di, vedremo levarsi un fil di fumo sull'estremo confin del mare. E poi la nave appare. Poi la nave bianca entra nel porto, romba il suo saluto..."

As the aria 'Un bel di vedremo' continued, Sonia sang with precision and elegance, captivating most of the guests in the garden.

Those who knew her recognized her as the mayor's daughter, but those who didn't. whispered to each other, "Who is this new actress singing in the Struyrian opera? Not bad!"

Michaela was initially proud, but her expression quickly fell when she heard the whispers. However, she couldn't openly confront anyone and had to suppress her feelings.

"Grandfather," Emmeline poured tea for Oscar. "Sonia's performance of 'Un bel di vedremo was really excellent, even comparable to the masters. Is there another piece you'd like to hear? I can request it on your behalf."

"Let's go with Libiamo nelieti calici," Oscar happily suggested, "that one is also beautiful."

Emmeline stood up and addressed Sonia on the stage, "Ms. Steiner, Grandfather requests 'Libiamo nelieti calici, please continue!"

Sonia, pleased that Grandfather enjoyed her performance, smiled gracefully and nodded. She gave a courteous gesture to the audience and said in her Struyrian opera style, "Please listen, Grandfather, to Libiamo nelieti calici".

The accompanying musicians began to play Libiamo nelieti calici", and Sonia proved that she wasn't just bragging. She performed the aria with remarkable skill, earning cheers and applause from the audience. When the piece ended, she took a graceful pose to acknowledge the applause.

"I'd like to request another one," Emmeline said, "how about 'O mio babbino caro?'"

Sonia was taken aback and thought, What do you make of me, a thespian?!

"Can't you sing it?" Emmeline asked, "Grandfather and the audience are looking forward to it."

Some guests in the audience joined in. "Yes, 'O mio babbino caro! That one!"

Sonia found herself in a difficult spot, her face turning darker. However, she couldn't back down either. Not when Oscar was in high spirits!

This time, she had truly dug her own grave.

Sonia despised Emmeline from the bottom of her heart and wished she could tear her apart on the spot. Her piercing eyes glared at Emmeline with intense hostility.

Emmeline noticed Sonia's piercing gaze and responded by making a mocking face, infuriating her even more.

Michaela's face turned almost black with anger, and she wished she could strangle Emmeline. But how could she dare to act when Abel was guarding his wife like a protective deity, never leaving her side?

Emmeline, Michaela thought, her eyes filled with fury. Just you wait! Let's see how long you can keep laughing!

"O mio babbino caro, mi piace, è bello, bello. Vo' andare in Porta Rossa a comperar l'anello!"

The music played as Sonia belted out the aria.

Emmeline, listening to her every note, had already started to admire her.

If this woman hadn't had a deceitful heart, she would have been quite the talent! It's a shame her talents weren't put to good use and could only be considered misdirected.

Sonia had had enough by the time she finished 'O mio babbino caro'. However, the audience wanted more, cheering,

"Encore!"

Michaela couldn't bear it any longer and stood up, addressing Oscar, "Mr. Ryker, Sonia is exhausted, and she has already sung several pieces. Can we call it a day?"

"Yes." Oscar waved to Sonia from the audience. "Come down. Let me reward you!"

Sonia quickly descended from the stage. However, on the last step, she slipped and tumbled down ungracefully.

[Chapter 1287 The Loser Barks Like a Dog](#)

The guests erupted in laughter.

Michaela hurried over to help her daughter up, her countenance changing multitudes within a few seconds.

Oscar did indeed give Sonia a generous gift, which the young woman held with mixed emotions. After all, not only had she been treated like a thespian, she even fell down the steps comically, giving Emmeline a whole lot to be amused about.

Sonia pondered upon seeing Emmeline's radiant smile and said to Oscar as an evil plan brewed within her, "Grandfather, I can't be the only one to offer you a performance at your birthday party. Abel's wife is also very talented. She should perform too, or else it wouldn't be fair!"

Oscar hesitated. After all, Emmeline was the wife of the Ryker Group's CEO. He certainly wouldn't want her to sing.

"Grandfather, you can't be biased," Sonia continued, clinging to Oscar's arm and pouting.

"Very well," Oscar finally relented. "For the sake of fairness and to avoid any appearance of favoritism, Emmeline will also perform a piece."

Hmph! Sonia shot Emmeline a nasty glare. Get ready to be humiliated!

To her surprise, Emmeline readily agreed, "Sure! Since Ms. Steiner showcased her best talent, I will do the same."

"I've performed traditional Struyrian opera, a quintessential art form," Sonia taunted. "Are you going to dance, Ms. Louise? Grandfather doesn't appreciate anything vulgar!"

"Why so agitated? Are you upset from embarrassment?" Emmeline chuckled. "I just want to calligraph a few words for Grandfather. How is this vulgar now? Grandfather regularly practices classic calligraphy himself. What do you have to say to that?"

Sonia widened her eyes in astonishment. Emmeline knows classic calligraphy?!

"Classic calligraphy?" Oscar was also surprised. "You know classic calligraphy?"

"Not only do I know it," said Emmeline with a chuckle. "I've even won awards. You'll see it for yourself once I write, Grandfather."

"Won awards?" Sonia sneered. "Yeah, right! The only woman in the country who won an international calligraphy award last year was Aurora Winters. Don't go thinking you can pose as her!"

"I'll let Grandfather decide once I'm done," Emmeline replied with a smile. "If my work doesn't meet his standards, I'll willingly accept the consequences."

"How will you be punished?" Sonia smirked. "Go on stage and bark like a dog?"

"You?" Emmeline retorted with a charming smile, returning the mockery.

"You!" Sonia's face turned pale with anger.

"Enough, both of you," Oscar waved his hand. "Prepare the ink and paper. Let Emmeline write the calligraphy!"

Oscar's personal assistant quickly instructed someone to make the necessary arrangements.

"Emma," Abel, holding Emmeline's hand, whispered, "You know calligraphy too? Why didn't I know about this?"

"Why should you know everything?" Emmeline playfully winked at him. "As your wife, do I need to report everything to you?"

Abel sighed. How many identities does this woman have hidden from me?

Before long, the ink, paper, and inkstone were all prepared, and the writing table was set up.

Emmeline folded the paper, spacing the characters evenly, and then laid it out on the writing.

When an expert took action, it was easy to tell. Her preparations in advance gave off an aura of confidence.

Oscar squinted his deep, eagle-like eyes and nodded in succession, making a couple of hm-s.

“Enough bluffing,” Sonia remarked from the side, unimpressed. “You might look the part, but one slip of the hand will expose you. Old Mr. Ryker isn’t easily fooled.”

Abel also felt a bit uneasy and whispered to Emmeline, “Babe, there’s no need to be pedantic and prove yourself. You can skip writing this calligraphy.”

“Why should I skip it?” Emmeline pouted. “Don’t you see the stage is set?”

“It doesn’t matter if the stage is set,” Abel said. “How about I take your place instead? I know a trick or two.”

“Shoo,” Emmeline pushed him. “I’m being serious here.”

“So am I!” Abel was getting anxious, not because he cared if she embarrassed herself in front of others, but because he didn’t want her to feel upset.

[Chapter 1288 The Calligraphist](#)

Abel could only give up.

Emmeline took the largest brush, dipped it in thick ink, and swiftly wrote eight large characters on the paper, emanating a rich ink scent.

The content was simple but in harmony with the occasion: Fortune as vast as the eastern sea, longevity greater than the southern mountains.

Oscar clapped his hands and exclaimed, “Well done! I’m already impressed that you can flourish these few words, Emmeline.”

The elder genuinely never expected a trendy and fashionable young woman like Emmeline to be proficient in classic calligraphy. She even did exceptionally well at that!

“Old Mr. Ryker,” Sonia glanced at the long piece of paper and was secretly impressed. However, she expresses discontent instead, “This is Aurora Winters’ style, isn’t it? She merely imitated her, no originality.”

“Yes.” Oscar nodded. “Aurora Winters is a rising star in the international calligraphy scene, and Emmeline’s imitation is quite remarkable.”

“I have to hand it to you, Ms. Steiner, Emmeline said to Sonia, “I didn’t think you’d know Aurora’s writing.”

“So what if you’re an expert copyist?!” Sonia raised her chin. “Show some originality if you’re so capable!”

“Haha!” Emmeline guffawed. “But I’m not done yet. No signature means it’s a draft. Why so agitated?”

“And you have the humility to put your name down on the paper?” Sonia retorted, “Don’t make a fool of yourself!”

“Well, I don’t really have a choice, do I?” Emmeline replied, “A piece of work needs a beginning and an end. Without a signature, it’s like incomplete work; that’s not good!”

With that, she picked up a medium-sized stamp and wrote the date and location before producing a seal from her jacket pocket, stamping it on a black space of the paper, pressing down firmly.

When she put away the large seal, a vivid crimson seal imprint stood prominently on the paper.

Abel was the first to look, and he read out, “Aurora Winters.”

What?! Oscar, Sonia, and the knowledgeable guests nearby were all stunned. Aurora Winters? This young lady is Aurora Winters, the international calligraphist who won a gold award?

“How can you steal Aurora Winters’ seal?! You’ll be thrown into jail!” Sonia accused Emmeline despite being flustered.

“Why would I need to steal?” Emmeline smiled. “This is mine in the first place.”

Sonia fell silent at once.

Emmeline took out the seal, uncapped it, and said, “It’s a genuine item. Would you like to verify it on the spot, Ms. Steiner?”

“Let me see it!” Oscar said with authority.

He kept a couple of Aurora’s calligraphy pieces in his study, and he was more familiar with the seal than anyone else.

Abel took the seal from Emmeline and handed it to Oscar, saying, “Grandfather, please have a look.”

Oscar took the seal and carefully examined it, making Sonia a nervous wreck.

“Yes, it’s Aurora Winters’ seal,” Oscar nodded. “Emmeline, you’re a calligraphist?!”

Sonia’s face turned pale, and she stumbled a couple of steps before her mother steadied her.

“You lost again, Ms. Steiner,” Emmeline smiled at Sonia. “Didn’t you say the loser has to bark like a dog? Well, everyone’s waiting!”

As if I’d actually do that! Sonia was unwilling. She could never hold her head high again if she barked like a dog in front of all the distinguished families of Struyria.

“Why make a bet when you never intended to adhere to it?” Abel snorted disdainfully. “What a bunch of crap!”

Abel called me a bunch of crap?! Sonia’s vision suddenly went black, and she nearly passed out.

“Let’s just forget about the punishment,” Oscar intervened, “Sonia’s a girl at the end of the day. It wouldn’t look good for her.”

“Grandfather,” Emmeline argued. “She started the bet herself. I’d have to bark if I lost, wouldn’t I? You have to be fair.”

“Yes, Grandfather,” Abel fanned the flames. “Emma is your granddaughter-in-law. How can you favor outsiders and let your family suffer?”

Oscar was rendered speechless, and he waved to Sonia, saying, “Sonia, since everyone insists, just bark a couple of times and treat it as child’s play.”

Tears welled up in Sonia’s eyes as she muttered, “Old Mr. Ryker...”

[Chapter 1289 Recordings of Birthday Wishes](#)

“Well, you said it yourself.” Oscar didn’t seem pleased.

He believed in keeping one’s word and actions consistent. Changing one’s mind like this wasn’t the right way to do things; it lacked integrity.

Seeing Oscar’s displeasure, Sonia dared not refuse anymore and said, “I’ll do it, Old Mr. Ryker. Please don’t be upset.

“Woof! Woof!”

Everyone erupted in laughter as Sonia’s face turned beet red, wanting nothing more than to bury herself.

“Emmeline, I didn’t know you were hiding such talents.” Oscar turned to Emmeline. “That said, I like your role. We can write together whenever you’re free.”

“I dare not, Grandfather.” Emmeline smiled. “I’ve merely adopted the alias of Aurora Winters for entertainment and participated in a few competitions. I honestly didn’t think I’d win any of them. It was purely by chance.”

“Don’t be so modest!” Oscar was delighted. “Your achievements bring honor to the family. It reflects well on me as well.”

“Thank you for your encouragement, Grandfather!” Emmeline replied happily.

Abel held Emmeline’s hand with suppressed ecstasy and said, “How dare you keep this from your husband? You better be ready for what I’ll do-” To you tonight.

Emmeline hurriedly covered her husband’s mouth, not letting him finish his words. “There are a bunch of people around!” she reprimanded in a whisper.

So, Abel could only whisper in her ear, “Once we’re home tonight...”

Emmeline blushed.

While Emmeline and Abel were playfully teasing each other, Sonia was seething with anger. First, they treat me like a thespian, and then they make me bark like a dog! How dare they bully me like this?!

“Mom,” Sonia whispered to Michaela. “When are we going to pull our trump card out?! I can’t take it anymore! I want that Emmeline to be done with. I don’t want to wait a minute longer!”

“Soon,” Michaela whispered back. “When everyone’s birthday wishes start playing, ours will follow suit. Be patient. Emmeline won’t stay smug much longer.”

The garden was filling up with more and more guests, each coming to wish Old Mr. Ryker a happy birthday.

In previous years, some guests would bring banners with congratulatory messages, often with well-wishes from their businesses or personal connections. These banners were vibrant and eye-catching, adorning the garden and creating a festive atmosphere. However, with the advancement of technology in recent years, these traditional banners have been replaced by congratulatory videos. Now, various companies, individuals, and families would prerecord their greetings and send them on USB drives as part of their gifts.

As the USB drives were collected, the emcee, with Old Mr. Ryker’s approval, began to project the videos onto the stage backdrop.

The guests watched the prerecorded birthday wishes as if they were watching a movie, creating an exciting and immersive experience. This modern approach not only reduced post-event waste but also proved to be more convenient and engaging.

It began with the Harrowgate family from Struyria. The head of the family stood alongside his children, grandchildren, and children-in-law, totaling about ten people. They all stood together and offered their blessings, wishing Mr. Ryker a life as abundant as the eastern sea and longevity exceeding the southern mountains.

Oscar was delighted, squinting his eyes as he chuckled and nodded repeatedly.

Next came the Harrowgate family members, who were also present at the gathering. They had met with Old Mr. Ryker in the hall earlier, and their gift had been listed on the gift registry in advance, ensuring everything was in order.

Following this pattern, most of the video greetings played out. Some videos even came from overseas, containing gifts and well-wishes, but the senders themselves were absent. For such cases, the Ryker family would send acknowledgments afterward, as there was no formal reception for these guests.

Michaela and Sonia sat together, their hearts pounding. With each video played, they couldn’t help but hold their breath.

They had no idea where their USB drive was in the queue, as it could have been copied to any position. Perhaps the next one would be theirs.

After four or five more video greetings, the moment they had been waiting for finally arrived -their video greeting started playing!

[Chapter 1290 The Secret Has Been Exposed](#)

The screen showed no one offering congratulations, only a blood-red background, and there was no accompanying background music. It was eerie and unusual.

As soon as this footage appeared, an instant hush fell over the crowd, and everyone’s attention was fixed on the screen. They thought there might be some technical issue with the video.

Even Oscar furrowed his brow, squinting at the screen on the stage.

Then, against the blood-red backdrop, bold white letters appeared, 'Emmeline Louise, disciple of the Adelmarr Clan, wishes Oscar Ryker a happy birthday.

Once these words appeared, whether people knew the insider information or not, they found the situation odd and somewhat creepy.

Why use such glaring white letters for birthday wishes? How disrespectful.

And the music that followed only made everyone erupt in shock-it was a mournful tune!

Oscar abruptly stood up, his expression tense. "What is going on? Why is an Adelmarr Clan disciple here? Isn't Emmeline Abel's wife? How did she become an Adelmarr Clan disciple?"

The video operator, realizing that something was wrong, immediately stopped the playback, but it was too late. Oscar was already fuming.

"Yes, it worked!" Michaela and Sonia exchanged glances, a mixture of nervousness and excitement.

Judging by Oscar's reaction, it seemed that he and the Adelmarr Clan had a deep-seated and bitter enmity!

Emmeline was also dumbfounded. She couldn't believe someone would reveal this secret on such an occasion. Whoever did it, they clearly wanted to make her look bad and also kick her out of the Ryker family!

Abel grabbed Emmeline's hand and reassured her, "Emma, don't worry. You've got me. But what's going on?"

"I don't know either!" Emmeline frowned. "Other than Mom and Dad, Adam is the only other person who knows I'm a disciple of the Adelmarr Clan. Who would reveal this now?"

Conversely, Lewis and Rosaline were equally shocked and worried when they saw the text. This is bad! Who'd cause such a major problem to our family?!

Oscar would certainly flip out if he found out Emmeline belonged to the Adelmarr Clan.

"Abel, Emma, listen to me!" Adam squeezed through the crowd. "I had nothing to do with this. I swear on my life, I have no knowledge of this!"

Abel remained silent, his face grim. He regarded everyone around him with suspicion, and at this moment, Adam was the most suspicious.

"Abel, Emma, you have to believe me. It really wasn't me!" Adam pleaded desperately.

"I never said it was you," Emmeline replied grimly. "You're not stupid."

"Yes, yes. You're right!" Adam nodded vigorously. "Don't worry, Emmeline. I will find the person behind this prank and seek justice for you!"

"Too late," Abel said in a low voice. "Can't you see that Grandfather is already frothing at the mouth?"

“I’ll try to talk to him and explain that this is a malicious prank,” Adam said as he made his way toward Oscar.

“Abel, Emma, what’s going on?” Adrien and Lizbeth also approached, their faces filled with concern.

“Emma, how could you be a member of the Adelmarr Clan? Don’t you know the history between the Adelmarr Clan and Grandfather?” Adrien asked urgently.

“What’s the point of discussing this now?” Abel replied. “The secret is already out!”

“To be honest, I had my suspicions,” Adrien continued. “Emma’s brother is surnamed Adelmarr, and his medical skills are extraordinary. Besides the Adelmarr family, who else could it be? I just didn’t expect it to be true!”

Landen and Julianna were also stunned by the video.

Emmeline is a disciple of the Adelmarr Clan? Is this news good or bad for the Meriwether Mansion?

It’s good, right? If this fact is confirmed, Emmeline would be kicked out of the family by Old Mr. Ryker, and Abel’s marriage with Emmeline would cease instantly as well! After all, the elder would never allow his granddaughter-in-law to be from an enemy family!

If Abel insists on not separating from Emmeline, then the Ryker Group... Will it potentially fall into Adam’s hands?