

Rising from the Ashes

Author: Only For You

Chapter 1

"I'm sorry, Andrew, but I can't marry you!" Christina Stevens declared coldly in the CEO's office of Stevens Corporation. She sat behind her desk, looking elegant in a black lace dress, her demeanor icy and aloof.

Across from her sat a handsome man in modest attire. Andrew Lloyd could not believe what he was hearing and asked, "Christie, what do you mean? What happened to the promise between us?"

They had agreed to tie the knot on the day Stevens Corporation went public, marking the end of their three-year courtship.

"Since we've been dating each other, I'll be frank," Christina replied, tucking a stray strand of hair behind her ear. Her stunning features exuded grace and beauty with every movement.

"Andrew, don't you think the gap between us has grown too wide? It's like we're from different worlds now. Forcing this relationship won't do you any good. For me, it would be... a burden."

A burden?

Andrew was stunned, never expecting Christina to say such a thing. If it had not been for his help, the Stevens family would have gone bankrupt long ago, let alone gone public. In fact, he had shaped Christina's success with his own hands.

"I know this decision is hard for you to accept. How about this? Consider it a debt I owe you. After we cancel the wedding, I'll give you a settlement—cash, a villa, and a luxury car. That should be enough for you to live comfortably."

Christina pulled out a pen and checkbook from her designer purse as she spoke.

Andrew watched in silence as she wrote down the figure: 1.2 million. He felt as if he was looking at a stranger.

"Is this all our years together are worth to you? Just a string of numbers?" Andrew asked.

Christina's perfect features flickered with complexity for a moment before settling back into indifference. "If you think it's not enough, I can add more. Name your price."

Andrew stared at her, pain evident in his eyes at how Christina had mistaken his question for thinking it was not enough.

"So, you're dead set on backing out of this marriage?"

Christina pressed her lips together and turned to look out the window. "If that's how you want to see it, I have nothing more to say," she replied.

She was a female CEO with a net worth of over 150 million dollars, with countless admirers in Jayrodale. Andrew, from any angle, did not fit into her world anymore. Not even on an intellectual level.

This marriage was not what Christina wanted—it was too ordinary for her tastes.

"I never thought years of love, countless nights together, and all those breakfasts and dinners I made would ultimately lose to the fear of being ordinary. It's no surprise—you're now the CEO of Stevens Corporation, Jayrodale's golden girl, with countless admirers. And me? I'm just a nobody, clearly not worthy of the outstanding Ms. Stevens."

Andrew chuckled bitterly, feeling utterly disheartened.

Christina's brow furrowed as she glanced at him. "Andrew, I admit you've done a lot for me, but this... it's not what I want. Forget it. I know you won't understand, no matter how much I explain. Take the money. Consider it compensation for your efforts over the years," Christina said as she pushed the check toward him.

Andrew did not even look at the check. "A 1.2 million dollars breakup fee? How generous of you, Ms. Stevens. But I don't need it."

He stood up and walked toward the door.

Seeing Andrew about to leave, Christina's frown deepened. "Andrew, I strongly advise you to take this money. Don't be a fool for the sake of pride. A small-time doctor like you could never earn this much in a lifetime."

Andrew ignored her words. In truth, 1.2 million dollars was not a sum he particularly needed.

"Hold it right there," a voice called out. A woman dripping in jewelry and wearing flashy makeup strode into the room.

Andrew immediately recognized her. "Aunt Irene!"

It was Christina's mother, Irene Cowell—who would have been Andrew's mother-in-law.

"Hmph, drop the 'Aunt Irene', we're not that close! If you're leaving, take your things with you. Our mansion has no room for your junk," Irene barked.

She pulled a small box and a credit card from her purse and tossed them at Andrew. The warmth that had briefly appeared on his face was instantly replaced by a cold expression.

It was the engagement ring he had carefully chosen for Christina, along with the money he had saved for their wedding. Even if the marriage was broken off, there was no need to hurt his feelings.

"Aunt Irene, you wanted this too? I thought I've always treated you with respect."

Irene let out a harsh laugh, her voice grating. "What's the matter, Andrew? Did I hit a nerve?"

"Mom, watch your mouth!" Christina snapped, her brow furrowing.

However, Irene was on a roll. "Why should I? He's nothing but a dreamer chasing the impossible. Does he think he can marry into our family? Not a chance!"

"Oh, Andrew, there's one more thing you should know. Christina will soon be engaged to Harvey Weller once he returns from abroad. You're not in the same league as Harvey, got it?" Irene's face was full of mockery as she said those.

Andrew looked at Christina icily. He was shocked at her audacity to find someone new before she even ended things with him.

Christina avoided Andrew's cold gaze, but her words were firm. "The Weller family is a powerhouse in Jayrodale, with influence across military, political, and business sectors. They've worked for generations to become one of the city's unshakable pillars. Harvey will inherit it all one day. An alliance between our families is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. For me, it's a chance to transform my life."

At those words, Andrew finally let go. He smiled and replied, "Is that so? Well then, allow this poor nobody to wish you and the Stevens family all the best in your social climbing endeavors."

With that, he walked out without another glance, showing no trace of attachment.

As she watched Andrew's retreating figure, Christina felt a whirlwind of emotions. She had expected him to explode with anger or beg her to reconsider when he heard about Harvey. Yet, throughout it all, Andrew had remained unnervingly calm, even indifferent at the end.

"Mom, do you think I went too far?"

Irene scoffed. "Too far? That good-for-nothing thinking he could marry you—now that's going too far!" She chuckled with a gleam in her eye. "Just wait until Harvey gets back, sweetie. Once you two are engaged, the Stevens family will skyrocket to the top tier of Jayrodale society. As for Andrew, he's nothing. Thankfully, he knows better than to mess with me and is cooperative. Otherwise, I would've taught him a lesson he'd never forget!"

Christina remained silent, feeling an inexplicable emptiness in her chest. It was as if something irreplaceable had suddenly vanished from her life.