

RISING FROM THE ASHES (ANDREW AND LAUREN)

Chapter 1421

George hissed, "Your pride should come from your abilities and your intelligence, not from riding on the family name or my name, walking around with your noses in the air!"

He slammed his hand on the desk, making everyone jump. "Right now, I'm still alive and can keep things in line, but someday, I'll be gone! And when that day comes, if you're still acting like spoiled brats who think you're better than everyone else, then all three of you are going to crash and burn!"

The Keller sisters fell silent instantly, but their faces were red with indignation, clearly showing how furious they were. They could not understand why their father would say such harsh things out of nowhere.

Did he really favor Andrew that much?

Was he really so eager to hand over his three daughters to some outsider?

Emily's jaw tightened as she argued defiantly, "Dad, maybe you're right, maybe we're blind! But there's one thing I refuse to accept!"

George's stern face remained unmoved as he let the butler adjust his suit buttons. Only then did he speak in a cold, measured tone, "I know exactly what you can't accept. You think I'm crazy for wanting to pass the Gabo Creek Chamber of Commerce chairmanship to an outsider, right?"

Emily gritted her teeth, "Exactly! Please tell me why you won't pass it to Logan or to me, your own daughter. Why would you choose to give it to someone outside the Keller family? It's not fair!"

Freya and Hannah immediately chimed in, "Dad, this isn't fair! The Chamber of Commerce chairmanship is crucial-it controls hundreds of elite families and major corporations! This is the Keller family's power and wealth! If you're going to pass it down, it should go to one of us Kellers!"

As they spoke, all three sisters' eyes began to well up with tears, looking utterly heartbroken.

George asked just one simple question, "If I give it to you, can you actually handle it?"

Hannah and Freya were struck speechless. One of them was chasing her dreams in the

entertainment industry, focused on her art. Meanwhile, the other spent her time partying and bar-hopping, living for nothing but pleasure.

Deep down, they both knew they could not handle such responsibility. However, Emily was different-she went to Meurico and graduated from Regalton University with a business doctorate and amazing business instincts. ŝnovel

Sure, she had lost over a billion dollars before, but that was only because her ambitions had been too big. When it came to actual business acumen, she was absolutely top-tier.

Emily stood up straighter,

confidence radiating from her voice. "Dad, for, the Chamber of Commerce chairmanship, I've decided to return to the family business! This time, I'll show you everything I'm capable of!

"Logan can take over your other responsibilities, but you can safely entrust the chairmanship position to me!"

George's expression remained blank, "Fine then. The board meeting is waiting for me to start. You can all come along, and I'll propose making Emily the chairman right there and then!

"But whether you can actually hold onto it depends entirely on you. As long as you can win everyone's respect and prove yourself, I have absolutely no objections!" Emily clenched her fist, her voice cold and proud. "I don't know if I can hold onto it or not, but I'm definitely more qualified and capable than Andrew!"

Freya and Hannah nodded enthusiastically, "Absolutely! Emily is way better than that Andrew guy!"

George sighed quietly to himself. His daughters were spoiled, sheltered, and completely naive. Compared to Andrew, he honestly could not find a single area where they measured up.

Andrew was a lone wolf-a true rogue who would dare slap a lion across the jaw. How could his three meek, naive daughters ever compare?

Chapter 1422

Logan whispered, "Andy, let me quietly fill you in on everyone here! That guy over there is Mr. Stein from Prima Group-he's worth over 50 billion!

"And that one is Mr. Drache, Blumedale's connection between the legitimate and underground worlds-he's got enough pull to summon martial kings!

"See that flashy socialite? Her husband was in the jewelry business, but he's dead now, and she inherited his assets worth hundreds of billions. She's one of the most powerful people in the Gabo Creek Chamber of Commerce!"

In the grand conference room of the Keller residence, well-dressed men and women continued to filter in and out.

Andrew and Logan sat tucked away in their corner spot, watching the steady stream of Chamber of Commerce members arrive. Logan kept up his running commentary, introducing each influential figure to Andrew.

Honestly, Andrew was not particularly interested. After all, it was just a meeting; no matter how high-ranking or wealthy these people were, he had seen it all before.

Back when he was still with the organization, the meetings he attended regularly included generals and regional powerhouses. Hell, he had even sat in rooms with heads of state from small nations like Aclania and Vestra.

Even then, Andrew had not bothered giving them a second glance.

Finally, over 80 official Chamber members arrived and took their seats. Among them sat Duncan, the head of the Irving family, in the front row. He gripped his crystal sandalwood cane and moved with a slight limp, but his posture radiated the ruthless confidence that only true power possessed.

Half an hour later, George finally made his entrance with his three daughters in tow.

Logan whispered, "Father deliberately showed up late."

Andrew asked, "Why?"

Logan explained with a grin, "As Chamber of Commerce chairman, you've got to maintain a certain image and presence! If he walked in with all the other members, it would seem kind of beneath him.

"Big shots always arrive fashionably late, and they take their sweet time doing it— that's what gives them character! You should learn this stuff. You'll need it someday!"

Andrew could not help but shake his head in disbelief. He could not help but wonder if it was really necessary to put on such an elaborate show.

George settled into the single chair at the head of the conference room and got straight to the point.

"Since everyone's here, I won't beat around the bush! Today might be my birthday, but I'm sure you all know the real reason we're gathered here!"

The 80 or so members instantly focused, their eyes gleaming with anticipation and barely contained ambition. Of course, they knew what he meant by 'the real reason'-this was about succession.

Duncan's grip on his cane tightened involuntarily as intense desire and ambition flashed in his eyes. He had been waiting for this day for years George stepping down and the chairman position finally opening up.

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"Mr. Keller Senior, I respectfully disagree with that statement! While Our Gabo Creek Chamber of Commerce business is certainly important, your birthday celebration absolutely cannot be overlooked!" Duncan's booming laughter filled the room as he rose to his feet, cradling an ornate red lacquered box in his hands.

A nearby attendant quickly stepped forward to receive it.

He added, "Mr. Keller Senior, please accept this small gift as a token of my respect! This is the Moonbone Scepter, once wielded by the Scarlet Matriarch of

the Fallen Crimson Dynasty!"

His announcement sent ripples of

shock through the assembled crowd. Many members exchanged glances, clearly impressed by the magnitude of such a gift. After all, the Scarlet

Matriarch's personal effects were legendary antiques and royal treasures. The cost was astronomical, but more importantly, items like this were virtually impossible to acquire, no matter how much money you had.

Duncan had truly outdone himself with this spectacular gesture.

George's expression barely changed as he responded flatly, "Thank you for the generous gifts! Such a precious present must have cost you quite a fortune!"

Duncan chuckled heartily, "As long as you're pleased, that's all that matters—it didn't cost much, just a few hundred million!"

He deliberately kept the exact amount vague, but he had already made his point perfectly. No matter how many zeroes, anything in that range was straight-up luxury-tier, sky-high, jaw-dropping kind of expensive.

Chapter 1423

Emily, Freya, and Hannah smiled as they stepped forward with their own birthday gifts.

The attendant announced, "From Ms. Emily, an original oil painting by Elias Greaves; from Ms. Freya, a rare medicinal pill from Mistveil Peak; and from Ms. Hannah, a string of sanctified prayer beads, blessed by the Grand Sage of the Solace Abbey!"

They could have given these gifts to George privately earlier. However, they deliberately waited until all the Gabo Creek Chamber of Commerce members were present to make their presentation.

First, it demonstrated the three daughters' affection for their father in front of everyone. Second, it was meant to pressure Andrew and show him what standards he was expected to meet—even casual gifts within the Keller family were beyond what ordinary people could dream of affording.

George's usually stern face softened slightly as he looked at his three daughters' gifts. "You girls are so thoughtful!"

Hannah pouted playfully, "Dad, aren't you going to ask how much we spent?"

George chuckled. "You silly girl, that's such a shallow question! But fine, how much did your gifts cost?"

Emily spoke with feigned casualness, as if the amount meant nothing to her, "When it comes to showing our love for you, no amount is too much-mine was just over 40 million!"

Freya, who disliked beating around the bush, was characteristically direct in her response. "I had a friend get this medicinal pill from Mistveil Peak for me. I don't know exactly what it's worth, but I heard it's really good for someone your age, Dad!"

George smiled knowingly, "Mistveil Peak medicinal pills are absolutely premium items that many people desperately seek but can never obtain. This one alone must be worth at least ten million, and with the connections needed to acquire it, you're looking at 30 million total!"

Hannah jumped in eagerly, not wanting to be outdone by her sisters, "Dad, my gift came from an exclusive auction in Chetvine, and it cost more than both Emily and Freya's gifts combined! I spent nearly 50 million on it!"

George beamed, "These are all wonderful gifts, and you girls have such loving hearts!"

His approval made all three daughters glow with satisfaction, and they could not help but turn to glance back at Andrew. They were clearly wondering what this outsider could possibly have prepared that would match their extravagant displays.

Everyone seated here was a top power player in their own right. Not a single person's gift would be anything less than spectacular, so if Andrew presented something cheap or ordinary, he would become a laughingstock.

One by one, the Chamber of Commerce members began presenting their carefully prepared gifts.

The Kellers truly lived up to their reputation as a top family just one step away from joining the Three Titans. George's birthday celebration alone was bringing in gifts worth hundreds of millions, and he practically needed a warehouse to store them all.

Finally, when most people had made their presentations, only Andrew remained without having given anything.

Logan chuckled. "There's no need for formalities-we're all family here, so let's skip the pretense!"

However, Andrew stood up with a calm smile, saying, "It's Mr. Keller Senior's birthday, and it's only proper for me to show respect. But I really don't have anything particularly impressive to offer-just heartfelt wishes for your good health."

Then, he pulled out a modest-looking small box and handed it over. The attendant accepted it and delivered it to George, who did not open it immediately but simply smiled warmly.

"Thank you, Andy!" George's smile was completely genuine.

Hannah suddenly called out, "Wait a minute! Dad, Andrew is someone you regard as practically a son, so his gift must be something really special) right? Why don't you open it and let everyone see what this talented young man you think so highly of has brought?"

Her words dripped with barely concealed malice, and anyone with half a brain

could hear the trap she was setting.

Chapter 1424

Emily and Freya chimed in with matching smiles, "Hannah is right, Dad! Open it up so everyone can see! Everyone else's gifts are out in the open, and we're all curious about what's in that little box!"

George hesitated for a moment, "There's really no need for that, is there? Andy's thoughtfulness is what matters-whatever he gave is perfectly fine with me!"

Duncan laughed mockingly, "Mr. Keller Senior, you can't say that! The Keller family's reputation is on the line here. If it's some cheap junk you can buy anywhere, I suggest throwing it straight in the trash. Otherwise, it'll just be an insult to you!"

Both Duncan and the Keller sisters were clearly hoping to see Andrew humiliated in front of everyone.

George glanced over at Andrew with an apologetic smile, "Andy, would you mind if we showed everyone? You're not bothered by that, are you?"

Andrew appeared completely unfazed, "The gift belongs to you, so whether you show it or not is entirely up to you! Though I'd suggest you might not want to reveal it publicly!"

George's eyes lit up with interest as he laughed heartily, "Could it really be something truly special?"

Duncan scoffed dismissively. "He's just putting on airs. If it's actually good, then it's more likely something shady or embarrassing!"

Emily added coolly, "Andrew, if it really is something good, then we'd love to see it just don't disappoint everyone!"

Hannah could not wait any longer and stepped forward to snatch the box right out of George's hands. With a look of complete disdain, she flipped open the lid without ceremony, and a delicate, sweet fragrance immediately filled the air around them.

Inside the silk-lined box sat a perfectly round, golden pill about the size of a grape, gleaming beautifully under the conference room lights.

Hannah, who clearly did not know what she was looking at, curled her lip in disgust. "Is that all? It's just some kind of herbal supplement-way inferior to Freya's medicinal pill!"

Yet, the moment her words left her mouth, the billionaire widow shot to her feet like she had been electrocuted. Her eyes were locked onto the pill with intense focus, and she began stammering uncontrollably.

"T-That's a high-grade miracle pill, isn't it? I once traveled to Terror Town and begged a master alchemist to create one for me. I spent nearly a billion dollars on it, but judging by the color and that incredible fragrance, mine was nowhere near this quality!"

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An elderly man also leaped to his feet, visibly shaking with excitement. "A seventh grade elixir-this is a heaven-defying seventh-grade mirade pill. Throughout all of Holtrien's vast territories and thousand-year history, the specialists who can create seventh-grade elixirs can be counted on one hand!

"Regardless of its specific effects, this miracle pill is priceless and virtually impossible to obtain!"

His declaration hit the room like a thunderbolt.

The Gabo Creek Chamber of Commerce power players erupted into chaos, all turning to stare at

Andrew with glowing eyes full of
hunger and amazement. Even

Duncan forgot his hostility for a moment, gaping at Andrew as if trying to see right through him.

He was clearly wondering if Andrew had any more of these seventh-grade elixirs hidden away somewhere.

George immediately snatched the
box back and tucked it protectively against his chest, laughing with pure joy.
"Andy, thank you for this

incredible gift! This is the one you created at the Grand Medicab Summit in front of everyone, isn't it?

Bút... what exactly does this elixir do?"

Andrew smiled calmly, "Didn't I wish you good health earlier? This Soul-
Restoring

Pill will ensure you live comfortably past your hundredth birthday!"

The collective gasp that followed was deafening. Everyone in the room, including younger members like Logan, looked stunned by this revelation.

George, who had weathered countless storms in his lifetime, could not contain his joy. "Wonderful, absolutely wonderful! Your gift surpasses everything else given today-it beats them all by miles!"

Such high praise might have seemed excessive, but nobody in the room disagreed. After all, while everything else in the world could be measured in dollars and cents, the length of human life was truly priceless.

A seventh-grade miracle pill that could guarantee living past 100 was nothing short of a legendary treasure.

The Keller sisters were completely dumbfounded. None of them had imagined that Andrew's unremarkable little box contained such an extraordinary item. Emily's expression was complicated as she stared at Andrew, unable to find words for a long time. She thought, 'A seventh-grade elixir, given away just like that. Is this guy really that powerful and generous?'

Freya, who usually only cared about art, found herself looking at Andrew with newfound curiosity.

And curiosity? That was always the first step down the rabbit hole.

Chapter 1425

Hannah might have been spoiled and scheming, but even she did not dare to underestimate Andrew anymore. Her eyes darted around as she thought he was seriously loaded with all kinds of amazing treasures.

Maybe if she reluctantly agreed to be his girlfriend, she could make a fortune off him.

Meanwhile, George waved his hand with obvious satisfaction, clearly delighted by the turn of events. "Alright, let's wrap up the birthday celebration! Now it's time to discuss the real business at hand!

"I'm sure you all know that I'm planning to step down from my position as Chamber of Commerce chairman! However, I've been struggling to decide on the right nominee for quite some time!"

The moment those words left his mouth, Duncan and Emily practically shot their hands up simultaneously.

Duncan declared, "Mr. Keller Senior, though I may be unworthy, I humbly accept the burden you've carried. From this day forward, I will devote myself entirely to the Gabo Creek Chamber of Commerce-with every ounce of my being, until my last breath!"

"Dad, by all rights and reason, your position should go to someone from our family! I truly believe I'm completely capable of handling it, and I'll even surpass your achievements!"

Andrew sat in the back with a slightly amused expression.

Logan sighed heavily beside him. "Emily has always been ambitious, but I never realized just how ambitious she really was."

Andrew chuckled softly, "Ambition is actually a good thing. A Keller without drive is just a declawed tiger-all roar, no bite."

Logan grimaced ruefully in response. "That's true enough, but ambition needs to be backed up by real capability! Emily is prideful and arrogant, and she's learned all those business methods from abroad that simply don't work here in Holtrien!"

Andrew shrugged casually, "But you heard what Ms. Emily said—she thinks she'll surpass your father's achievements!"

Logan snorted coldly, "That foolish girl is way too young and doesn't know her own limitations! Our father's accomplishments are currently unmatched by anyone in the younger Keller generation!"

"Of course, now that you're practically part of our family too, you might actually be able to exceed my father's success someday!"

Andrew waved dismissively. "Logan, you're giving me way too much credit! I think the Chamber of Commerce chairmanship should go to Ms. Emily!"

In the front row, almost immediately after Emily made her declaration, Freya and Hannah spoke in perfect unison, "We fully support Emily taking over!"

Their coordinated support gave Emily an immediate boost of confidence as she turned to face Duncan with a triumphant smile. "Mr. Irving Senior, I apologize for this! I'd love to let you have the seat-but alas, duty forbids it."

Her words sounded polite, but every syllable was laced with sharpness and pride -pure, unapologetic Keller heiress energy.

Duncan stayed cool as ever and laughed calmly. "Well, with all three Keller daughters joining forces, how could I possibly compete?"

Emily lit up with excitement. "So... you're saying you won't fight me for it?"

Duncan held out his hands. "That's right. I wouldn't dare go up against you, Ms. Emily. I'm old now and can't keep up with you youngsters."

Emily was ecstatic. She had not expected to snag a position with that much power so easily. It felt like victory had landed right in her lap.

Freya and Hannah were just as thrilled. The whole thing felt effortless, like winning a prize without even buying a ticket.

The three of them high-fived, squealing and chatting as they turned in unison to glance over at

Andrew. They thought that while

George supposedly favored Andrew for the role, Andrew did not even get the chance to speak up—he was already irrelevant.

But then, a calm voice rang out.

"Prima Group supports Mr. Irving Senior as Chairman."

That one line hit like a spark in dry chaff. Soon, others chimed in one after another.

"The Maddock family backs Mr. Irving Senior too!"

"The Tanner family stands with Mr. Irving Senior. No one else is even in the running."

"Globeworth Group? Full support for Mr. Irving Senior!"

"Mazenigma Solutions—if it ain't Mr. Irving, we're out."

Within moments, over a third of the 80 or so Chamber of Commerce members had declared their support for Duncan. Moreover, they did not just sound supportive—they sounded unyielding.

It was as if Duncan was the only person they would recognize as a leader, and everyone else was just noise.

The Keller sisters' confident grins froze mid laugh, and their color drained instantly. The excitement in their chests was gone in a blink, replaced by a sickening drop of pure panic.

The higher you flew, the harder you crashed—and right now, they were crashing fast.